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OUR QUEEN MOTHERS

By the same Author :

LOVE STORIES OF ENGLISH QUEENS
QUEEN ALEXANDRA, THE WELL BELOVED
WOMEN OF THE DAWN, ETC.



Photograph

H.M. QUEEN MARY
Wearing the Order and Insignia of the Garter.

(W. & D. Downey)

OUR QUEEN MOTHERS

By

ELIZABETH VILLIERS

With 17 Illustrations



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FOREWORD

TO read the stories of the long line of Royal ladies who have been the Queens Consort of England in the centuries since the Conquest, is to unfold a series of studies in gracious womanhood, tinged by the romance that is truly human, exalted by a sense of duty that is truly royal.

As a lovely chain may hold some ugly links, so a few of these stories deal with women of another type, but they are the exceptions which go to prove the rule. By a very large majority our Queens Consort set an example, as wife and mother, their subjects might follow to advantage. Here an effort has been made to show them as they really were, touching on their early lives, their love stories and their marriages, but stressing most the influence they wielded over their kingly sons, an influence which extended throughout the known world.

Only those Queens who survived their husbands have been dealt with, the Queen Mothers, to use the beautifully tender, yet truly regal, title King George bestowed upon Queen Alexandra at her widowhood. Strictly speaking no other Royal lady has borne the title, but the spirit for which the words stand has existed through the ages, and thus it is as Queen Mothers these widowed Queens Consort of England are gathered here.

E. V.

OUR QUEEN MOTHERS

I

ADELICIA OF LOUVAINE

THE FAIRY PRINCESS

IF ever a name conjured up a sweet and gracious personality, surely that of Adelicia of Louvaine has such a charm. In imagination we see her as a fairy princess, light and graceful, fragile and lovely as Titania, the heroine of songs sung by bards in baronial halls, the fair lady for whose smile knights tilted at the jousts. In this case imagination is confirmed by actual fact. The canons of loveliness alter with the times, but her portrait, as engraved on the seal of the Charter she gave to Reading Abbey, shows a perfection of feature and sweetness of expression which made her beautiful in all time.

The first authentic record we have of her, shows her as a young girl bending over her embroidery frame, while beneath her deft fingers a banner began to glow with a heraldic device, brilliant with silks and golden threads. Her father, Godfrey of Brabant, was going to battle to fight for that debatable land of Lorraine which he claimed as part of his kingdom, and Adelicia embroidered this banner with the entwined Arms of Lorraine and Brabant in token of his claim.

That banner he carried to victory. It was his mascot, and when the news of the amalgamation of

the two kingdoms spread over Europe, men spoke also of the wonderful banner and of the beauty of the girl who had worked it. Minstrels sang at many Courts, extolling her skill and artistry, her gentleness and sweet devotion, as well as her loveliness of face and form.

Henry, Emperor of Germany, had been one of the allies who had helped to set Godfrey on the dual throne. He had seen the banner, he had heard of its young embroidress, and, with a great train of followers, set out to visit her father's Court, accompanied by his English-born wife, the Empress Matilda.

Great tournaments and banquets were given at his honour, festivals in which, as a matter of courtesy, his proud young Empress was enthroned as Queen of Beauty ; yet Adelicia's loveliness could not pass unnoticed and, to the credit of Matilda, she showed no jealousy of her rival . . . if such a word could be used. The two girls were about the same age, still in their teens, and as they shared the rejoicings of victory, they were drawn together in a close friendship never to change.

Though they became so fond of each other, no two women could have been more different. Matilda was reserved, proud, arrogant, a Royal lady in every sense of the word, and though her marriage could not be described as happy, she enjoyed the power given into her hands, and was extraordinarily popular at the German Court. On the other hand, Adelicia was truly feminine, seeming younger than her real age, just as Matilda was older than hers. She had strength of character, certainly, but it was the strength of gentleness, though she admired her new friend for her dominance and fiery pride.

During that visit, when resting between one brilliant function and another, the girls had heart-to-heart talks, and often Matilda spoke of her own childhood, of her sainted mother, Margaret of Scotland, dead these many years, of her brother

lost in the wreck of the White Ship, and how her father lived a lonely life, mourning always for those who had been taken from him. True he was a great scholar and had many interests, but nothing roused him from his apathy, unless he was stirred to his occasional paroxysms of wild rage, or still wilder terror, probably the result of some form of indigestion.

Adelicia's tender, girlish heart was stirred with pity for the old and lonely man in his isolated splendour. She heard a great deal of her friend's father, of her friend's early homes in London's Tower, in the palaces at Westminster and Windsor and Woodstock, and felt she knew England well from the descriptions the Empress gave.

Some of Matilda's English followers had accompanied her to Brabant, and returning to England, carried accounts of the Fair Maid to the court of the English King. Absorbed in grief for his wife and son, probably King Henry paid little attention to the stories of the beauty of the young Princess, but he was intrigued by accounts of the banner she had worked with so much skill. Himself an artist, everything artistic appealed to him. For the first time for many months he was roused to show some interest, and the nobles who were in his confidence came to the extraordinarily wicked scheme of marrying him, prematurely old and broken as he was, to that fairy princess who was his daughter's friend.

A Commission was sent to Brabant, suggesting an alliance between Henry of England and Adelicia, and when he saw the rich gifts the English King had sent him, Godfrey gave his consent without hesitation.

Educated to think it was her duty to marry without protest any man chosen by her father, probably Adelicia was quite pleased with the arrangement also. She was going to England, that country which had been her friend's home, and though communications were difficult, there was a

prospect of her meeting Matilda again and the certainty of hearing from her.

On April 16th, 1120, the betrothal was finally sealed, and Henry came in person to conduct his chosen wife to his own land . . . a high honour, since generally the bride was brought to her husband and married after her arrival in the country of her adoption.

The meeting was a dreadful shock to the bride elect. Though we do not know the exact date of her birth she must have been about sixteen or perhaps a little less, while Henry was fifty-two. It was not in actual years that the disparity was the most marked. The joy of life was hers, while his heart was in the grave of his dead wife, and only his longing for a son to succeed him had brought him to consent to this second marriage. Alternating with his moods of indescribable gloom and his black remorse at the part he had played in the death of his brother Robert, he gave way to spasmodic outbreaks of fury so terrible that those about him had decided he had better marry again that his wife might be at hand to bear his violence.

What a bridegroom for the Fairy Princess !

Though Henry went to Brabant to escort her to England, they were not to be married until they reached this country. She arrived in the early autumn of 1120, and there is a tradition that the wedding was celebrated privately at Ely Cathedral directly after her landing. If that ceremony ever took place it was kept a secret and Adelicia became Queen Consort of England by a very magnificent wedding celebrated in the chapel at Windsor . . . then called Windleshore on account of the winding of the river at the hill's foot . . . a day or two later the bride and bridegroom set out for Westminster that the young queen might be crowned.

Few scenes of the many enacted within the walls of our Abbey have been more strange than that at the coronation of this girl queen.

The Archbishop of Canterbury was very old and partly paralysed, therefore the King commanded Roger de la Poer, Bishop of Salisbury, to officiate at the ceremony. Ralph of Canterbury was furious at what he considered a slight, and the Church itself was divided into two factions, but the King's wish was considered paramount and no one doubted that de la Poer would place the consort's crown on Adelicia's head.

"The King is represented as advanced in life, and in a melancholy attitude, his face handsome, with high, regular features, his hair curling but not long," says Strickland, describing contemporary portraits. His dress is shown as being: "Close stockings and breeches all in one (tights as we should say) with the long-pointed shoes that had been invented by a gentleman known as Fulke the Quarreller, who introduced them to hide his corns!!! The regal mantle is folded about him," goes on Strickland in her description of the King. "He wears his crown and carries his sceptre, sign of his regal power. The Queen, in common with other ladies, is dressed in a fairly close-fitting gown, over which she wore a trailing mantle that depended from her coronet and completely hid her hair. That was another fashion of the times. Unmarried girls allowed their hair to hang loose or perhaps in long plaits, but married women braided theirs closely about their ears or hid it altogether."

Although Henry had been crowned years before on his accession, it was considered imperative the ceremony should be repeated, and because disturbance from the adherents of the Archbishop was feared, the Coronation was fixed for an extremely early hour. Roger de la Poer was nervous also, he gabbled through the service in his haste to get it over. However, the crown was duly placed on the King's head and the girl Queen was kneeling before the Bishop waiting for her own crowning. In the twelfth century the Consort was not anointed nor

had the ampulla or vessel to contain the holy oil come into use.

Suddenly there was a loud disturbance at the western door.

Into the crowded Abbey came a procession of monks, at their head the old and crippled Archbishop in his full robes, half-supported, half-carried by other dignitaries of the Church. Plainly afraid, though it must have been by moral suasion, Roger de la Poer drew back, leaving the newly crowned King seated on his throne, the still-uncrowned young Queen on her knees.

"Who dared to put that crown upon your head?" demanded the Archbishop, and, however frail his body, his voice had lost none of its power.

That moral suasion held the King also. He cringed before that terrible old Archbishop, mumbling some excuse.

"My Lord Archbishop, if the ceremony has not been properly performed it can be done again," he added weakly.

The old man showed his agreement in startling fashion. He lifted his crozier and with it knocked the crown off the King's head so that it rolled on the floor. At a sign, one of the monks picked it up, on which the Archbishop replaced it with due ceremony on the King's head and then went on with the crowning of the Queen, quite unperturbed by the cries of consternation which echoed down the aisles, or the fact that de la Poer looked on with frowns.

The first few weeks after their marriage the King and Queen spent in London at the Tower where the Royal apartments had been furnished and decorated according to the taste of Henry's first Queen and were exactly as in her lifetime. Henry's depression over the loss of his first wife grew greater amid such surroundings, and though Adelicia may have been



ADELICIA OF LOUVAINE

From her portrait on the seal of the charter she gave to
Reading Abbey, which she founded.

impressed by the many virtues of her predecessor, that stay at the Tower cannot have been anything except an ordeal.

They went to Woodstock in a little while, and there she found a new interest in the King's collection of wild animals, the first Zoo in England. The park was completely walled in, and the collection must have been remarkably large considering the difficulties of transport. Stowe tells us : " The King craved from other Kings, lions, leopards, lynxes and camels and other curious beasts of which England hath none. Amongst others there was a strange animal called a stryx or porcupine, sent by William of Montpelier. Which beast is, amongst Africans, counted a sort of hedgehog, covered with pricking bristles."

That collection of animals interested Queen Adelicia so deeply she ordered a work on Natural History to be specially written for her use. The dedication of that book survives :

PHILIPPE DE THUAN, IN PLAIN FRENCH
HAS WRITTEN THIS BOOK ON ANIMALS
FOR THE PRAISE AND INSTRUCTION OF THAT GOOD
AND VIRTUOUS WOMAN
WHO IS CROWNED QUEEN OF ENGLAND AND
IS NAMED ALIX.

It will be seen he adopts another form of spelling for her name, but evidently " Adelicia " presented many difficulties to the scholars of her time and hardly any two of them wrote it alike.

Soon after their arrival at Woodstock Henry was called to lead his army against the Welsh. During his absence, and later when he quelled a rebellion in Normandy, Adelicia lived in retirement at Woodstock. She took no part in the affairs of State, and there was no suggestion she should act as Regent as his first Queen had done. This girl Queen was

content to live in her secluded palace, studying her Natural History, encouraging the arts of music and poetry, widening her mind, becoming more thoughtful and sweet and accomplished with the passing of time,

The Welsh campaign did not last long, and before he went to Normandy one of the great troubles of the young Queen's married life had begun. Henry made no secret of his reason for marrying her, and she gave no sign of bearing him the children for which he longed. No record has been kept of his anger against her, yet there is no doubt he did "let himself go," taunting her with cruel fury because of his disappointment.

As time went on the unhappiness of her married life grew greater, especially when the King sent for her to join him in Normandy. Of course she went, wifely obedience having been impressed upon her, but it was with bitter regret she left her beloved Woodstock. Henry's vile temper grew more vile still, as his digestive troubles increased, and in the dead of night he was haunted by dreadful nightmares. Waking suddenly he would scream that murderers were hiding under his bed or creeping soft footed along the corridors to kill him. Stowe gives a vivid picture :

" The King complained to Grimbald, his Saxon physician, that he was sore disquieted at nights, and that he seemed to see a great number of husbandmen with their rustical [*sic*] tools stand about him, threatening him for wrongs he had done against them. Sometimes he seemed to see his knights and soldiers threatening him, which sight so feared him in his sleep, that oftentimes he rose undressed out of his bed, and taking a sword in his hand sought to kill those he could not find."

Because of this terror he ordered a sword and shield should be placed by his bedside ready to his hand. Not content with that protection, often he would leap out of bed in the darkness, declaring he dared not stay in his room, would force his

young wife to fly with him through dark corridors to another apartment where he would stand on guard behind the closed door, brandishing his sword and muttering threats against the phantoms his diseased brain conjured into life. Such disturbed nights, Malmesbury tells us, were alternated by periods of heavy sleep "in which he lay like a log, his rest broken by loud and perpetual snoring."

Poor Fairy Princess!

They were in Normandy when word was brought that the Emperor of Germany was dead, on which Henry commanded his daughter to join him forthwith. She obeyed reluctantly, but planned to return as soon as possible. The German nobles had the highest opinion of her capacity to govern, and had sent a deputation begging her to remain as their Empress, "promising they would find her a second husband more worthy of her dignity."

When Henry insisted his daughter should return with him to England, Matilda's haughty anger flared high, and Adelicia had to exercise all her gentle influence in striving to heal the ever-widening breach between father and daughter. As a virtual prisoner Matilda was brought to Windsor, being given a suite of apartments adjoining her young stepmother's, and, there one day Adelicia surprised a little scene which gave her an idea. This is not so much history as legend, certainly, but the substrata of truth is very strong.

Entering her stepdaughter's apartment unannounced, Adelicia found her standing before the long mirror of polished steel, holding above her head a magnificent crown that flashed with a dozen splendid gems.

"What have you there?" Adelicia demanded, amazed by the sight of so much unexpected magnificence.

Still holding the crown above her head, Matilda turned to face her stepmother.

"It is the Imperial crown of Germany," she said.

"I brought it away with me, meaning to go back wearing it." (This is actual fact. Matilda brought the crown to England hidden in her baggage.)

"It suits you well," Adelicia said slowly, watching while the ex-Empress lowered the jewelled circlet on to her hair, then turned to the mirror again to glory in the picture she made of proud womanhood, the Imperial crown on her brow.

"I was born to be an Empress . . . to rule," Matilda retorted, and Adelicia turned away. That picture in the mirror had given her an idea she must carry out without delay. Before she could reach the door Matilda stopped her. "You will not betray me to my father?" she asked. "You will not tell him you have seen . . . this?" she gestured proudly towards the crown she was wearing.

"You need not be afraid . . . I will keep your secret and will help you to rule if I can," Adelicia answered. That was her plan. When she joined the King she reminded him that though they had been married six years they had had no children, therefore Matilda as the only surviving child of his first marriage, was his heiress. Why should he not appoint her his successor to the throne.

King Henry demurred, chiefly because of his anger against his daughter. There had never been a reigning Queen in England, he pointed out, in which he was not quite correct since in Saxon days one Queen had ruled in her own right for nearly a year. Also the people would not obey a woman, he added, the suggestion was absurd.

Adelicia persisted, however. She was one of those gentle, earnest women who can be very persistent at times. She pointed out that if Germany had been willing to be governed by Matilda why should England refuse? The ex-Empress had the brain and courage of a man, and as the daughter of Matilda the Good had a hold on the hearts of the people already. So much she said with a great deal more, and in the end the King gave way. To his

surprise he found the idea favourably received wherever it was mooted, and presently he ordered a gathering of his nobles which probably took place at Winchester . . . other authorities give Westminster. In the great hall, with Adelicia seated on the dais, watching the scene with appreciative eyes, King Henry took his daughter by the hand and leading her forward presented her to the Barons as their future Queen.

Shouts of approval greeted the words. In her Royal robes, with her haughty beauty and grace, Matilda looked every inch a queen. She was a woman for whom every man felt it would be an honour to fight to the death. . . . More, she was a woman who might lead armies to victory in the field.

Everything promised well and all might have gone according to plan if Matilda, with the mind of a man, had not possessed the heart of a passionate woman.

As the nobles stood with swords upraised to greet her, a young man broke from their ranks, to fall on his knee before her. He was Stephen de Blois, son of King Henry's sister, therefore Matilda's first cousin, though it does not appear they had ever met before.

"Here is my sword, lady," he said. "By the cross on its hilt I swear to fight in your service against any who should dare to question your right to your father's throne."

Matilda bent to touch the sword he offered, and as she did so their eyes met . . . hers looking down into his held invitation . . . his, as they looked up into hers, lighted with the glow of admiration. Smile answered smile, and Stephen would not have been the man he was if he had not understood exactly the conquest he had made.

"My cousin . . . my vassal . . ." Her low voice made the words a caress. "Later you will come to me again . . . we will speak more of your loyalty and the help you will give me."

As a man who was a little dazed, Stephen rose to his feet. He knew the eyes of the ex-Empress followed him as he went back to his place amongst the other barons. He realised the advantage which would follow a wedding between himself and Matilda. He was the next male heir to the throne, if he and she could rule jointly there would be no fear of internal dissensions or civil war. By such a marriage he had everything to gain. . . .

Later they met when no one else was near, and there is little doubt Matilda engineered the tryst. She came towards him smiling, both hands held out, but he fell on his knee before her.

"Ah, do not kneel," she whispered very softly. "Now we are alone there need be no formalities between us. We are both of Royal blood, and though I am a proud woman I can be humble with . . . the man I love."

"That I do not doubt." Still he did not rise from his knee. "But, madam, before we talk further in this strain I may remind you that I have a wife already."

Of course she had known that. Though he and she had not met she could not have been ignorant of family history, but the words were a blow. She reeled a little, then recovered herself to laugh harshly.

"A poor man may be bound to his wife," she said. "But one who is a King . . . or almost a King . . . can find means of freedom. You have a wife, you say, and she . . ."

"She is the woman I love," Stephen de Blois returned as he rose to his feet and faced her with finality.

The scene which followed was dramatic if not elevating. Matilda always violent when thwarted, gave way to an outburst of fury so great that even her father in his worse paroxysms could have hardly equalled it. By the time he left her, Stephen seems to have been disgusted. Whatever attraction she might have had for him before, was gone.

Adelicia saw her plan fall to ruin through a woman's thwarted love. The ex-Empress, repenting her violence, tried to see Stephen again and again. To put it crudely, she ran after him so blatantly that he left the Court hurriedly, and after he had gone the scandal reached King Henry's ears. According to the ideas of the times there was nothing to be done except marry Matilda off there and then, and having selected the bridegroom he thought suitable, the King went to the room where she sat glowering at the fire.

"You will look more cheerful when you have heard the news I have brought," he said in effect. "My daughter, I have chosen a husband for you, one who is young and handsome, scholarly and well born, and the marriage can take place without delay."

"His name . . . tell me his name?" Matilda returned listlessly, though her eyes showed a flash of interest. She was wondering whether Stephen had changed his mind and had approached her father, or it may be she was remembering some noble in Germany, the one "who was more worthy of her dignity than the Emperor."

But neither of these was the man in King Henry's mind. "He is Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou," he told her, and possibly added the story how Count Geoffrey, when going a-hunting, put a sprig of flowering broom (*planta genista*) in his cap and so won the surname of Plantagenet. He was the first to bear the name that was to be royal.

"I will not marry him," retorted Matilda decidedly.

That was a bombshell. In the twelfth century not even an ex-Empress and future Queen was allowed to defy her father's wishes where the choice of her husband was concerned. Adelicia, so gentle and law abiding, was horrified, King Henry fell into his madman's fits of fury, and, later, when the state of affairs became known, the Nation, which had been prepared to welcome Matilda royally, began to think

that a woman who could be guilty of such unheard-of rebellion, could not be fit to rule.

"Besides," added Matilda, when she was driven to bay, "how can I marry any man when my first husband, Henry of Germany, is alive?"

"But he is dead and buried," Adelicia pointed out. "You have told us how, crazed with grief at his father's death, he rose up one night from your side, and taking his staff, with naked feet, clothed only in a woollen garment, he rushed out into the darkness and afterwards was found dead."

"A man was found dead," Matilda pointed out. "And the body was believed to have been him. But since I have been in England I have heard from him. . . . I have proof that he is alive."

"Where is he?" she was asked.

"Here in England," she repeated. "He has become a hermit and is known as The-Called-Of-God. I cannot tell you more."

Geraldus and another contemporary historian tell that story and apparently King Henry was sufficiently impressed to have inquiries made. Nothing in confirmation came to light and there seems no doubt it was an invention of Matilda's to prevent the marriage with Plantagenet.

Christmas came with many gaieties, to find her a prisoner in the rooms of her young stepmother, allowed to take no part in the festivities. The King felt sure that Adelicia's gentle influence would succeed where violence failed.

In this he was right. When Whitsuntide came, Matilda gave way. Clad in cloth of gold from head to foot, she allowed herself to be brought from her seclusion and publicly betrothed to the man of her father's choice; after which she and the King left England for Normandy where the marriage was to be celebrated at once, Adelicia remaining at Windsor.

Apparently Matilda had consented to the marriage only in the hope of finding some means of escape at the last moment. Literally on the wedding eve she



ARUNDEL CASTLE

Seat of the Duke of Norfolk. The home of Queen Adelicia during her widowhood and throughout her happy second marriage.

Photo
Central Press

was missing. By some means she had escaped her guards and mounted on a swift horse was riding for Germany. Before she gained the frontier, she was overtaken and dragged back a prisoner, but it was not until August 26th they forced her to go to the altar with Plantagenet. What happened during the intervening weeks we do not know. The silence in itself tells of imprisonment and hardship, calculated to break even her strong, proud spirit. She became Geoffrey's wife though he must have been a brave man to risk marriage with such a woman under such conditions. Not long after their wedding came rumours that she used to thrash him soundly with a whip if he dared to thwart her, expecting abject obedience from him, while even in public she refused to treat him with common courtesy. Perhaps he was not a brave man after all . . . only a weak creature who took the line of least resistance.

In their respective marriages the difference between Adelicia and her stepdaughter became doubly apparent. Matilda faced tragedy with the pride of arrogance, not that womanly pride which helped Adelicia to do her duty without flinching or complaint. Through all she had to endure, the Queen bore herself with the gentle dignity that hid her sorrow from the world, finding consolation in her simple piety and her joy in all that is beautiful in Nature or in Art.

Adelicia had been Queen Consort for fifteen years when King Henry died in France from his surfeit of lampreys, and was brought back to England in a solid silver coffin to be laid in Reading Abbey which he had founded. Directly the breath was out of the King's body, Stephen de Blois claimed the crown in direct violation to his oath to Matilda. A large body of nobles supported him, and news came that Matilda was gathering an army to fight for her rights.

Adelicia was greatly troubled, yet her chief thought was to remain apart from the tumult of the times. She withdrew to Arundel Castle, which had been bequeathed to her by the King, and with the help of a scribe began collecting materials for a biography of her husband. That she should be an inconsolable widow was impossible, but she was too sweet-natured to harbour any but pleasant memories, and had been proud of the dead King's scholarly attainments.

While she was engaged in this literary work, an interruption came in the appearance of a gallant knight who rode to Arundel on his prancing charger in the truly romantic way. . . . William de Albini, surnamed Of-the-Strong-Hand, was described as the handsomest and most chivalrous nobleman of his time.

Adelicia gave him a warm welcome, and afterwards I think they walked together through the lovely woods that slope to the Arun's waters. There he opened his great true heart to her.

"You know how long I have loved you," he said in effect. "Though while the King lived, loyalty to him and to you kept me silent. Yet I could not hide all, and you must have understood something of what you are to me."

"I have understood," she answered. Until now, when she was free, the secret on both sides had been kept loyally. No breath of scandal ever darkened her name, or shadowed the beauty of this belated love story.

"And now you will reward my long devotion . . . you will come to me?" he asked.

"Leave me until a year from now has gone," she told him. "Then come back. If I am alive you will find me waiting."

Albini bowed to her wish. For the year's probation he went to France on a diplomatic mission and there met with an adventure so strange and romantic room must be found for the story, although it has nothing to do with Adelicia directly.

His visit to Paris was to attend a tournament held at Bourges in honour of the marriage of Louis VII of France with Eleanora of Aquitaine, and in the lists he distinguished himself so gallantly that he had to take the handsomest prize of the day from the hand of Queen Adelaide, the dowager Queen of France. Without wishing to be flippant it must be said he seems to have had an extraordinary attraction for widowed queens, for at the end of the tournament Adelaide very brazenly told him she had fallen in love. She suggested he should become her husband and even hinted it was possible she might depose her son and share the crown with her consort.

Albini realised it was a brilliant prospect and Queen Adelaide was a handsome woman, but he told her straight out that "His troth was pledged to Adelicia, Queen of England," and he wanted no other love.

That part of the story is true beyond question, but the sequel, as related in medieval romance, is remarkable to say the least. The interview seems to have taken place in a garden where, shut up in a cave, a most ferocious lion was imprisoned. The Queen was so furious at the rejection of her love that she opened the gate in the cave and with her own hand pushed Albini into the den, locking him in. The lion sprang, and the knight was unarmed, but he had not been named Strong Hand without cause. At the critical moment he thrust that strong hand of his into the lion's mouth and killed the creature by pulling out its tongue. Whence say the old chroniclers, to this day the armorial bearings of the House of Howard bear a tongueless lion.

However that may be, Albini returned to England to marry his fair princess and, assuming the title of Earl of Arundel, received the castle and lands from his wife. To quote Strickland: "At this feudal castle, on the then solitary coast of Sussex, that Royal beauty who for fifteen years had presided over the splendid court of Henry Beauclerk, voluntarily

resided with the husband of her heart in the peaceful obscurity of domestic happiness, far remote from the scenes of her former greatness."

Adelicia, who had been childless throughout her first marriage, presented Albini with a son and heir within a year of their wedding, and their rejoicings over the birth were at their height when storm broke again.

The watchman on Arundel tower saw a party of horsemen, a hundred strong, riding through the wood . . . all the southern shore was clothed by that great forest of Anderida of which the fossil tree in Hastings Park is a survival. Right to the castle the party came, their leader asking shelter for Matilda, Queen of England and one time Empress of Germany.

Adelicia hastened to the gate to welcome her stepdaughter and very affectionate were the greetings between them. Matilda with her following had landed at Portsmouth the previous day and was on her way to the West Country where risings in her favour had been planned. Yet, on the whole, the people were in favour of Stephen, her position was full of peril, and she begged she might have shelter here, at Arundel.

Adelicia and her husband naturally realised their own danger if they acceded to such a request. But Matilda, the haughty, pleaded to her stepmother for the sake of their girlish friendship; she pointed to the new-born child Adelicia loved and spoke of her own little sons left behind with their father in France. And so she conquered. Albini read his wife's wish and told Matilda she would be safe in Arundel.

Hearing of the landing, Stephen marched in hot haste to besiege the castle and take the fugitive Queen prisoner. It is easy to imagine all Adelicia must have felt at the possible storming of her loved

home, at the danger which must beset her husband, but she remembered Henry's wish that Matilda should succeed him on the throne, and looked upon her stepdaughter as the rightful ruler of England . . . as, indeed, she was.

Matilda, on the other hand, was in panic lest Adelicia should give her into the hands of her enemy, though she ought to have known her stepmother better than to have mistrusted her. Though gentle and peace-loving, Adelicia had magnificent courage where her sense of duty was concerned, and she firmly believed duty to her dead husband insisted she should protect her guest. Without wavering she waited the approach of Stephen's army and saw him and his men encamp under the castle walls.

Before they could begin the attack, however, a messenger brought the King a letter written by Adelicia. We are told that in this letter :

"She entreated his forbearance, assuring him 'that she had admitted Matilda, not as his enemy, but as her daughter-in-law (stepdaughter) and early friend who had claimed her hospitality, which respect for the memory of her late royal lord, King Henry, forbade her to refuse. These considerations would compel her to protect her Imperial guest while she remained under the shelter of her roof, and if he came in hostile array with intent to make Matilda his prisoner, she must frankly say she was prepared to defend her to the last extremity, not only because she was the daughter of her late lord, King Henry, but as her guest.' She besought Stephen 'by all the laws of courtesy and the ties of kindred, not to compel her to do anything against her conscience.' She concluded by requesting with much earnestness 'that Matilda might be allowed to leave the castle and retire to Bristol where she had friends.' "

Looking back, it is impossible not to feel that the request must have seemed a hopeless one. Stephen had everything to gain by pressing the siege, and by

letting Matilda go free he was imperilling his kingdom if not his life. In those days of chivalry, few men paid any attention to a woman's entreaty, and Stephen, as he had shown by the breaking of his oath, was no better than his fellows.

Yet that request of Adelicia's was granted, which is taken as a proof of the affection and esteem with which the "Fairy Princess" was held by all sorts and conditions of men. Stephen replied that since he understood the obligations of hospitality, he would withdraw his men at once, leaving the way clear for Matilda's escape. It was a gesture of true chivalry, reflecting as much to his credit as it did to Adelicia's.

The army went, and again Matilda set forth on her journey, doubtless fearing a trap, though none was set. The two who had been friends for so long took an affectionate farewell of each other, and at that parting at the gate in Arundel's barbican, Adelicia's influence over her stepdaughter came to an end. So far as we know they never met again. For eight years Matilda remained in England, striving to win back her throne. Once, her success was so assured that she was crowned at Winchester and entered London as acknowledged Queen of England; but the friends of Stephen were too powerful and, to the great regret of her stepmother, she lost the success she had gained. After eight years of hopeless struggle she gave up the attempt and returned to her husband, who had been by no means inconsolable at her absence, and her three sons. When Geoffrey Plantagenet died of fever, she took over the management of his estates and governed them so well that it is obvious she had learnt wisdom with increasing age. Probably she benefited by the influence of her stepmother, though the benefit made itself felt so late.

She lived to be sixty-three years old, dying in 1167, and thirteen years earlier she had had the satisfaction of seeing her son, Henry Plantagenet, successfully fight for the throne she had not been able to gain.

While the exact date of Adelicia's death is uncertain, it must have happened some considerable time before that of her stepdaughter and friend. For at least eleven years, if not for longer, her happy home life continued in stately Arundel. She did not forget her first husband, however, and bestowed on Reading Abbey a new charter in his memory, together with a golden pall, embroidered by herself, to lay upon his tomb. The portrait of her, given here, is a reproduction of that on the seal of the charter.

She bore her second husband seven children who survived her, and in addition "mothered" her youngest brother, Joscelyn of Louvaine, who came to make his home with her in England. He married the heiress of the Percies, and thus two of our ducal families trace their descent direct from the Royal line of Louvaine. The Dukes of Norfolk are descendants of Adelicia, and the Dukes of Northumberland of her brother.

After those many happy years in Arundel, she travelled to Affligham in Flanders, where one of her brothers was a monk, and while there she died. Some authorities say she had become a professed nun, but that has been disputed, though if she did surrender her home happiness for a cloister it would have been quite in keeping with the spirit of the times. Strickland has no doubt on the subject and writes: "She withdrew from the pomp and splendour of earthly grandeur, and from the endearments of her adoring husband and youthful progeny and crossing the sea, retired to the nunnery where she ended her days and likewise was buried. . . . Strange as it must appear to us that anyone who was at the very summit of earthly felicity, should have broken through such fond ties of conjugal and maternal love as those by which Adelicia was surrounded, to bury herself in cloistered seclusion, there is indubitable evidence that such was the fact."

Whether she became a nun or died in Flanders

while on a visit to her brother may be uncertain, but of her deep piety, her strong sense of duty, her gentleness and yet her latent strength, there is no doubt. She had no Royal children, but she was truly a Queen Mother since her influence over her stormy stepdaughter was strong and all for good.

ELEANORA OF AQUITAINE

THE QUEEN WHO LOVED THE EMIR

BESIDE the narrow window of the cell a monk stood watching the road outside. Upon the bed Louis VI, King of France, lay dying, his dulled eyes watching the cowled figure for some sign, his ears strained to catch the sound of approaching hoofs he longed to hear. At long last the monk turned.

"I see a cloud of dust far off along the road," he said. "A cavalcade approaches."

A faint smile chased the tragic shadow from the white face, the King smiled tremulously. "They are coming, my son and his bride," he whispered. "God be thanked they are here in time."

Again they waited, the monk standing with bowed head, his beads clicking faintly. He was praying for the soul of the King who was near his passing, praying also for the Prince soon to be King, and for Eleanora, the girl bride, ruling Duchess of Aquitaine in her own right and future Queen of France.

That cloud of rolling dust came nearer. The sound of hoof-beats could be heard; presently there was the noise of arrival and question, the door of the cell opened and the Prince and his bride entered, she a girl of barely fourteen, who bore herself with the pride and assurance of a woman who had been educated to rule. They were days when all guardians were expected to arrange the marriages of their

wards without consulting the brides, even affectionate fathers "gave" their daughters away to any man, friend or enemy, who was in the position to drive a bargain. Therefore it says much for the manner in which Eleanora asserted herself that not only had she been asked whether she was willing to marry the heir to the French throne, but actually had been allowed to see him before making her final choice. And this, in spite of the fact that the marriage was desired for political reasons. France was a divided land, and the union of its King with the ruling Duchess of Aquitaine should bring peace between two conflicting elements.

The young couple had been actually standing before the altar when news of the King's illness had been brought, and they had started at once for the Abbey of St. Denys to which he had been carried at the time of his mortal seizure.

They knelt beside the narrow bed, and the eyes of the dying man searched the girl's face. He saw beauty there, he realised she possessed strength of character, he knew she would have that indescribable fascination we call sex appeal. Yet he sighed heavily. His son was a mild and scholarly man with a strong sense of duty. Would this girl grow up to be a fitting mate for him, or would she . . . ? The thought must not be pursued, its answer lay in the far future, and the King tried to find consolation in remembering that Eleanora was more highly educated than most princesses of her time, and that her literary and artistic gifts were very high. Her poetry lived for ages after her death, her name is enrolled amongst the poets of France.

Gently the dying man spoke to the bride and bridegroom, but it was to her he addressed almost his last words.

"Remember, Royalty is a public trust," he said. "Keep its demands, its duties, before you always. For the manner in which you exercise your power you will one day have to render an

account to Him who has the sole disposal of crowns."

He died with that solemn exhortation on his lips.

Directly the funeral was over, the young King and Queen entered Paris for their coronation, and it was at one of the tournaments in honour of the accession that William Albini attracted the attention of the dowager Queen, widow of the King who had just died.

The King and Queen were approaching the town of Vezalai in Burgundy, returning from a campaign she had compelled him to undertake to satisfy her anger against one of her nobles. He rode in sombre silence by her side, his face darkened by brooding tragedy. It was common knowledge that the marriage was unhappy, the girl Queen's open defiance of ordinary morality, not to say of decency, had shocked his Court. She composed and sang ribald songs, she said openly that love between married couples was impossible, and declared herself an apostle of what we call the doctrine of Free Love. Certainly she lived up to her own creed. Appalling as all this must have been to Louis, it was not this alone which had brought that sadness to him now. During the war just finished the tragic horror of the holocaust of Vitry had happened, and the King was haunted by the memory of a market-place piled high with the blackened, twisted bodies of old men, of women and children, dragged from the blackened ruins of the burnt cathedral. Vitry town had been besieged by the King's forces, Vitry castle had fallen, and the non-combatants had crowded into the cathedral for sanctuary. By orders of the King, the castle had been set on fire . . . the flames spread . . . the cathedral was close and much wood had been used in its construction. Too late efforts were made to stay the conflagration. When the flames

died down the remains of thirteen hundred dead were taken from the ruin into the market-place.

King Louis never forgot, the whole of his life afterwards was tinged by melancholy.

He was thinking of the horror as he rode towards Vezalai, but presently roused to wonder at his reception. Many people were flocking along the road, all bound for the city, yet few recognised his presence or the Queen's. Some other matter of still greater importance called them onwards.

The nearer to the city he approached the greater the crowds became. In the suburbs throngs were jostling, men shouting to each other that the Call had come . . . women, screaming hysterically, were clinging to the men as if to hold them back, or seeming to push the men towards the unknown. Puzzled, the King stopped his horse to ask what the commotion meant.

He was told that the Abbot of Clairvaux was to preach in the market-place. Many had heard him already, others were coming from all parts of the country. As a wave of fire his eloquence was sweeping through the land.

Probably as much from curiosity as from interest, Eleanor insisted she and the King should join the crowd in the market-place, but she smiled contemptuously when she saw the man they had come to hear. Why had they been so foolish as to pause to listen to a dotard, she asked. It was not possible he could say anything it would amuse or interest them to hear.

The Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux . . . St. Bernard as he is to us . . . was very old and very, very frail, the result of years of fasting and penance. "He could hardly support himself erect," writes Michelet in his *History of France*, "yet he found strength to preach to a hundred thousand men. The multitude thought it was a spirit rather than a man they saw as he appeared before them, with his white beard, his hoary hair, with but scarcely visible indication

of life in his cheeks." He looked a corpse, and yet "when he spoke he sent forth the breath of life over the multitude."

Inspiration was upon him that day in the market-place. He had taken up that message Peter the Hermit had first broadcast, calling all who could bear arms to flock to the East that the Holy Sepulchre might be freed from infidel rule. He told sinners their hope of salvation lay under the banner of the Cross, then suddenly turned directly to the King and Queen. Freedom of speech, denied to others, was allowed to him. None could have stopped the stream of fiery eloquence surging from his lips. He spoke of Vitry, he called on Louis and Eleanora to purge their souls from the stain of those thirteen hundred deaths by joining the Crusade. So only might atonement be made. . . .

"We will go to the Holy Land to fight," said Eleanora suddenly.

At the moment Louis, carried away by the lesson he had heard preached, eager to free himself from the burden of the Vitry horror, was in full agreement with his wife for almost the first time ; but on reaching the capital his views changed. The Prime Minister, the Abbé Suger, once the King's tutor and always his good influence, was a personal friend of St. Bernard's, and in warm sympathy with the Crusade, yet he felt Louis had a duty to his people and ought to stay at home. Eleanora would have none of it, however. If the men would not fight the women should, she declared, and forthwith formed a regiment of ladies who wore specially designed light armour and indulged in exercises with the lance and sword to fit them, as they thought, for serious fighting.

History repeats itself. In the early days of the late Great War, some misguided if enthusiastic women went about presenting white feathers to young men not in khaki . . . the white feather being the sign of the coward. Those women probably

did not know they were following the example of Eleanora and her Amazons who sent their distaffs to their lovers or husbands with the sneering message that the men had better stay at home to spin while the women went to fight.

That gibe conquered common sense. Louis gathered an army for the East, but he took the Queen and her ladies with him. And although they were equipped with that light armour and said they were determined to fight alongside of the men, they insisted a ship should be laden deep with rich garments and feminine fripperies.

Having landed in the East, they were struggling through the valley of Laodicea, much hampered by the enormous amount of baggage the women had brought. Guerrilla bands of Arabs harassed their rear, till Louis determined to turn and fight, meanwhile sending on his advanced guard with the Queen, ordering they should camp upon a high and rocky ridge he pointed out, and there wait for him and his main army to join them.

Unfortunately, half-way to the ridge, the advance guard came upon a fertile valley with flower-strewn grass and "fountains." At once Eleanora, who ought to have had more sense, declared she was too tired to go farther. Why should she toil to the bare and rocky height when she had reached this lovely resting-place, she said. In vain the men in command pointed out the danger, besides reminding her of the King's orders.

"The orders of the King do not count against my wishes," retorted Eleanora. "Here I wish to stay, and stay here I shall."

After which there was nothing to be done but let her have her way.

A camp was pitched, in luxurious tents the ladies began to rest and eat, when the night was made hideous with a thousand shouts. Every rock and craig amid the heights that shut in the valley belched forth armed men . . . Turk and Arab and

Saracen streamed down the steep on every hand, exulting that the Crusaders and their women were at their mercy.

Taken by surprise the men rallied wonderfully. Somehow they flung up barricades of baggage, they put the women in their midst and, forming a hollow square, prepared to fight to the death. For hours the battle raged, then came relief. Louis with his rear-guard, having driven off the attackers, came up, thinking to find a camp on the height where they might rest, instead being met by the horror of this valley of slaughter. Already exhausted they rallied, and in the end the Saracens and their allies were driven off, but not until six thousand of the French lay dead upon the turf and all baggage and munitions had fallen into enemy hands.

To remain in that death trap was out of the question. Dragging their wounded, staggering with fatigue, supporting each other as best they could, the poor remnant of the army struggled to reach Antioch, that city in which the followers of Christ were first called Christians, and which had remained a stronghold of the faith through the ages. Reeling, exhausted, many dying, the fugitives strained towards the great castle on the height; it had been built, or rebuilt by the Crusaders, from whose highest turret the banner of the Cross was floating. As they approached, the gates were opened, many of the garrison streamed out to meet them, and while King Louis stayed to give orders about his men, Eleanora went on with a new escort to the castle.

Just inside the threshold where the portcullis hung, a soldierly figure stood waiting to greet her.

"Welcome to Antioch," said the Governor of the castle. "You should know me well, Queen Eleanora, for I am Raymond of Poitou, your father's brother."

So he was, but he was a young man and a very handsome one, and in his polished armour and embroidered surcoat made a contrast to the dishevelled King who had borne the brunt of the

fighting. Eleanora gave him her hand with her particularly fascinating smile and thereupon chose to forget all about the relationship.

Raymond of Poitou was hospitable . . . particularly so where Eleanora was concerned . . . and there seemed no reason why the remnant of the French army should not remain at Antioch to recuperate. That was at first. Before long, King Louis saw a very excellent reason why they should not stay, and wrote a long letter to the Abbé Suger complaining of the flagrant conduct of the Queen and Prince Raymond . . . in justice to Eleanora let it be added that some of the chroniclers declare the Prince had long private interviews with the Queen that he might advise her as to her conduct of affairs at Aquitaine. With another woman that excuse might be accepted, but with Eleanora it is impossible to escape the conviction that the King's jealousy was well founded.

Of course Louis remonstrated with his wife, equally of course she laughed in his face, till he decided on very drastic action.

Eleanora was roused in dead of night by one of her ladies who begged her to get up and dress quickly. Wondering what was afoot, the Queen obeyed; but hardly had she dressed, when a cloak was flung over head and shoulders, stifling her in the heat of the Syrian night. She felt herself lifted in the arms of a strong man who carried her through a narrow postern to where a horse waited, swung her on to the saddle-bow in front of him, and galloped off into the breathless darkness, with her swathed and helpless in his hold.

By the time she was released, Antioch had been left far behind and she found herself at a camp the men of Louis had pitched by the roadside. Furiously she demanded what her husband meant by the outrage, to be told he had determined to part her from Raymond and to prevent the couple taking an emotional farewell.



ELEANORA OF AQUITAINE

From the statue on her tomb at Fontevrault. That she was shown with a book in her hands was a tribute to her scholarship and love of literature.

" You think to help your own cause with me by this high-handed conduct," she told him. " You have robbed me of a friend, but before long I will find a lover."

She was as good as her word. The little band, in the face of difficulty and danger, pressed on to Jerusalem, still held by the Crusaders, and Eleanora seemed to settle down in the great castle which had risen from Roman foundations. One day, before she had been in the sacred city long, she leaned from a high window to look at some Eastern procession passing along the narrow street, and saw a glittering figure mounted on a splendid Arab steed. " An Emir of great wealth and surpassing personal beauty," is the description we have of the gentleman.

The Emir lifted his dark eyes to the woman leaning from her window, and the woman, in her folly, waved her jewelled hand to him. What happened next we do not know, but the East is the world of mystery and intrigue, and the Emir knew how to go to work. Some veiled woman came to the Queen's side, a disguise was provided, and Eleanora, ready for any adventure, allowed herself to be taken to an assignation with her new lover.

She returned in the morning, laden with jewels, only to repeat the adventure again and again. There, in a brief sentence, is all we know of her affair with " Saladin the Emir," but of his existence there is no doubt. The King's letters home to Suger prove that, as they prove the Queen's guilt. Some confusion exists as there are chroniclers who suggest this handsome Emir was that Saladin who fought against Cœur de Lion thirty years later, but in that they are wrong. Saladin the hero was in the prime of life when he won Palestine back from the Crusaders, probably he was about the same age as Richard. Some few years ago I read a romance, it did not pretend to be anything else, in which the two Saladins were described as father and son, the latter being the child of Eleanora who, somehow, had been

claimed and brought up by his father. There does not seem any historic foundation for the story, yet it is possible, and holds unlimited drama. When the scenario writers of Hollywood were asked to make a film of the Crusades, it is difficult to imagine how they overlooked the emotional situation of brother fighting brother, the one for the Crescent, the other for the Cross. Also the unconfessed relationship might account for the very strong personal attraction the two adversaries felt for each other.

After the affair with Saladin King Louis never lived with Eleanora again. He proposed to divorce her on their return to France, but Suger pointed out the scandal that would be caused, and thus the ugly story was hushed up while the Queen went her own wilful way.

Geoffrey Plantagenet was sent by his wife, Matilda, to the French court to try to raise money for her invasion of England, and one unpleasant rumour has it that he had to run away again because of the Queen's violent love-making. Two years later he died of a fever and his eighteen-year-old son, inheriting Angou, came to Paris to "do homage" to the King as his liege lord.

Eleanora "fell in love" with the lad according to her lights, though she was thirteen years his senior. At first her blatant advances met with coldness. During the years his mother had been struggling to gain the English throne, Henry had visited this country often . . . he had been Adelicia's guest at Arundel . . . and in a castle on the banks of the Wye, he had met that Fair Rosamond Clifford who won the best love of his not very reputable life.

Boy and girl they had loved, it is believed they had married and he had left his young wife behind when he had come to Paris to be enmeshed in Eleanora's wiles. Finding he was not to be won by her

undoubted charm, the Queen appealed to his ambition. She pointed out that as things were, his mother's efforts were futile, but the English crown would be won by him if he were backed by Aquitaine men and Aquitaine gold. The possibility of being Queen of England appealed to her. Her present marriage could be set aside, and once she and young Henry were man and wife she would see to it that the throne his mother claimed was his.

That argument won the day. He put his Fair Rosamond from his mind and swore to the French Queen that he would marry her when she was free.

The Abbé Suger had died, but remembering his arguments Louis refusing to appeal to the Law for a divorce, made the convenient discovery that he and Eleanora, being cousins, were within the prohibited degrees of relationship, therefore he begged the Pope to annul the marriage which was done. Within six weeks Henry and Eleanora were married, the ceremony taking place on May Day, 1152. Their first child, Prince William who died in infancy, was born the following August.

As Duke of Aquitaine by right of his wife, Henry was in a position to dictate terms to his mother's enemy and the death of Stephen's elder son helped matters considerably. Common sense prevailed all round. Stephen was to remain King for so long as he lived, it was arranged, but he would acknowledge Henry as his heir, Matilda giving up her own claim in favour of her son. Stephen died within a few months of the signing of the agreement, and before Christmas Henry and Eleanora were crowned at Westminster.

Soon the Queen became jealous of her boyish husband. Their Court was of unexampled splendour, they rode in triumph from one great city to another. She seemed to have all wishes, all ambition gratified

to the full, yet she was not contented. Contentment never was her lot, her spirit was too stormy to know rest, but in this case there was a good reason for the suspicions which beset her. The King had taken her to his many palaces, to Westenhanger House near Hythe, to the Tower, to Westminster, to Oxford, but he showed no disposition for her to visit Woodstock, though that had been the favourite home of other monarchs and the wonder of its walled park with its collection of strange beasts had been told to her. Already travelled as she was and widely read for her times, naturally all that was beautiful and interesting in Woodstock intrigued her.

What made matters worse was that the King absented himself for quite considerable periods and, when asked where he had been, replied he had been hunting in Woodstock forest.

But Woodstock was the secret home of that Fair Rosamond the King loved, and the most earnest desire of his heart was to keep all knowledge of her existence from the Queen. On the other hand it was of equal importance that Rosamond should not learn of his marriage.

To state his case mildly, Henry found himself in a difficult position. To quote Strickland : " How he excused his perjury to both Rosamond and Eleanora is not explained. He seems to have endeavoured to keep both in ignorance of the truth. As Rosamond was detained by him a prisoner, though not an unwilling one, it was easy to conceal from her that he was wedded to the Queen, but his difficulty was to conceal Rosamond from Eleanora."

That was a difficulty indeed. No one has ever accused Eleanora of stupidity or slowness of thought, and before long she determined to find out the truth whatever it might be.

When next he went to Woodstock, she followed him, installed herself in the palace during his absence and went out to explore the walled park in person. Suddenly she came face to face with her husband,

who showed his dismay at seeing her as well he might. All this she noted without seeming to do so, and she saw also that clinging to one of his spurs was a fragment of floss silk.

To quote Brompton, one of the old historians, practically a contemporary : " The Queen kept the matter secret, revolving in her mind in what company he could meet balls of silk. Soon after the King left Woodstock and Queen Eleanora searched a thicket in the park and discovered a low door, cunningly concealed. This door she had forced and found it was the entrance to a winding path that led to a sylvan lodge in the most retired part of the adjacent forest."

In that " retired lodge " the angry Queen discovered a beautiful woman working at an embroidery frame, two little boys playing at her feet, and the clue of the floss silk was complete.

Exactly what followed we do not know. Certainly the story of Rosamond being murdered by the Queen after having the choice of death by poison or a dagger, is a fiction, introduced by a romancist five hundred years later, though the incident would have been quite in keeping with much of Eleanora's character. The wonder is she did not have her rival killed. Murder was not required, however, to complete the poignant emotion of the scene in which both the women command full sympathy. There is every reason to believe that until the moment of her being confronted by her rival, Rosamond did not even know her lover was the King and had no idea of his marriage. On the other hand, there is much proof that she was a legal wife and that Eleanora's marriage was not valid in consequence.

Probably after great suffering and emotion Rosamond promised to give up her husband or lover for ever. Even in the twelfth century, when Kings were despots, it would not have been easy for one to commit deliberate bigamy and escape punishment, and to save Henry, Rosamond bade

him an eternal farewell and retired to "a little nunnery at Godstow," where she lived in retirement for twenty years and there died, at last, in the odour of sanctity. All that time Henry is believed never to have seen her, but he was a liberal patron of the nunnery for her sake which gives colour to the story of their having been married, and certainly proves that she was very dear to him. Her children were his greatest care, and when he lay dying, he said to the one who was with him to the end: "You are my lawful sons, the others are illegitimate," a definite statement which was made most certainly, and seems to put the fact of the marriage beyond doubt. Further, when King John ascended the throne he took it upon himself to erect a splendid monument over the grave at Godstow, and, even remembering his mad eccentricities, it is hardly conceivable he would have done that unless he had believed in her marriage.

Of the existence of the "bower" or hunting lodge which was her hiding-place there is no doubt. Within a hundred years of her death, Edward III wrote an order for certain repairs to be carried out at Woodstock, particularising that: "The house beyond the wall by the New Gate shall be built again and the chamber called Rosamond's Chamber to be restored as it was before, and crystal plates (glass windows) be provided for it."

5

Many children were born to Henry and Eleanora, and of these, seven, three daughters and four sons, lived to grow up. On her daughters the Queen does not seem to have lavished very much affection, but mother love became the ruling passion of her life concerning her sons, or concerning three of them at least, Henry, Richard, afterwards our national hero Cœur de Lion, and Geoffrey. Her youngest son, born at Woodstock, that place of turbulent memories for

her, never had any share of her love and as certainly never deserved it. After his birth she lived almost entirely in Aquitaine for many years, while that youngest child, Prince John, remained in England. Indeed it may be said roughly that the eldest and the youngest of the boys were brought up by their father, who indulged them to a degree of folly which verged on imbecility, while the other two, Richard and Geoffrey, were in their mother's care.

Eleanora's complex character emerged in a new light. Her love for her boys, her justifiable pride in them, were at once tender and tigerish. They were handsome lads, skilled in all forms of athletics, while Richard was a giant in height. They were the heroes of every tournament whose lists they entered, yet were scholars and artists in appreciation of all that was beautiful. Not even pretending to love her husband, all the love of which Eleanora's strong soul was capable, was centred on her sons. She lived for them, she dreamed how greater and more Royal inheritances might be theirs.

Child marriages were customary, and both the Princes had been married when tiny lads, Richard to Alice of France, the child of his mother's first husband by Louis' second wife . . . a queer tangle of relationships. Geoffrey's wife was Constance of Brittany, but neither of the lads had seen their brides since their early childhood.

In France there were wars and rumours of wars, but England was a distracted country, plunging from one disaster to another. Henry had to lead his armies against the Welsh, the Scots and the Irish again and again, there were internal riots, and his frequent quarrels with his advisers, notably with à Becket, were further complications.

The martyrdom of the Archbishop in Canterbury brought about a fresh rupture. Prince Henry, hitherto loyal to his father, was devoted to his old tutor, à Becket, and when he heard of the murder he left England to join his mother and two brothers

in Aquitaine. At that family gathering the Queen and her sons drew more near together, while the breach between her and her husband widened with fresh cause.

Princess Alice, to whom Richard had been married in his childhood, had been sent to England to be educated and, to put it very mildly, had attracted the admiration of his father. Legally she was the wife of the young Prince beyond all doubt, but as they had not met since infancy the marriage was "in name only," so in fairness to Henry, might be ignored. Still, the fact remained that an unpleasant intrigue was on foot in which the young girl seems to have been quite as much to blame as her middle-aged lover, and public opinion was shocked.

Eleanora and her sons heard the story with growing indignation. Richard, then seventeen, wrote demanding that his wife should be sent to him without delay, and Geoffrey, two years younger, wanted to know why his bride, Constance of Brittany, and her fortune were being kept from him. Behind both letters may be seen their mother's hand. Also Richard had been crowned Earl of Poitou as Geoffrey was of Normandy, and Eleanora declared the two earldoms were ancient honours and their holders had no need to acknowledge the King of England as their feudal lord. The Queen Mother and her sons were ranged definitely against their father.

After much quarrelling King Henry set out for Aquitaine, leaving Princess Alice behind in England. His arrival at the Duchy suited the Queen and her sons. Exactly what they had planned to do we do not know, but probably they intended to make Henry prisoner. Certainly he was to be dethroned, and young Henry to go back to England to claim the crown with Richard and Geoffrey taking full possession of Poitou and Normandy.

The King landed at Calais and at once rode to his Normandy estates to receive his vassals before continuing his way to Aquitaine where his wife and

sons waited. Amongst the nobles who waited to greet him was Raymond of Toulouse, with whom Eleanora had a long-standing feud. At the time of her first marriage he had refused to kneel before a woman, and to punish him she had persuaded her husband to go to war. In that war the catastrophe at Vitry had happened and in the universal horror that had excited, the question of Raymond's homage seems to have been waived. Since then he had made an alliance with Louis, however, and now professed himself willing to be King Henry's man.

Henry was glad to welcome such a vassal, and, seated on his chair of state, he waited as first one and then another of the Norman nobility knelt to take the oath of allegiance. Then it was Raymond's turn.

He knelt, he took the oath unfalteringly till he came to a part in which he had to pledge himself to give the King advice in time of danger. At this point he added a sentence not in the prescribed sentence.

"I advise you, King, to beware of your wife and sons," he said.

News of that warning reached Eleanora and brought panic. Plainly the Count of Toulouse had contrived to obtain secret information, and his story, when it came to be told to the King fully, meant the wreckage of the Queen Mother's plans. Already Henry and his men were within the borders of Aquitaine, flight was the only hope, flight to the King of France, the Queen decided, though why she should have been so sure that he, her one-time husband, should be ready to give shelter to her and her sons is strange. Probably she knew a great deal more about his mind than we do and had been in correspondence with him already.

A narrow wicket in the castle wall was opened, through it crept four figures, apparently those of youths. Quickly they reached a thicket in a wood where a handful of men-at-arms and other attendants

waited with four led horses. The fugitives mounted in haste and soon were riding along the road for Paris, swiftly certainly, but not with sufficient haste to attract special attention from those they passed on the way. No one seems to have noticed them particularly. Nobles and soldiers in great numbers passed to and fro about the city, and these, though lightly armoured and well mounted as men who had to ride fast and far, seemed little different from the rest.

Yet they were the Queen of England and her young sons, fleeing from the King they would have betrayed.

After them on the soft wind came the ring of hunting horns. The King's men were giving chase.

"Take different roads, it is the only way," Eleanora said, and the young men acted on her advice. What words of farewell were said, what promises exchanged, what hopes of early meetings at the French King's Court were expressed, we do not know, but, surely, despite her soldier's dress, Eleanora dashed away many scalding tears as she parted with the lads she loved with the most ennobling passion of her storm-tossed life. Who shall say what warning came to her that withal the separation would last for many years, that with two of the three it would be until Eternity.

Ashamed of her woman's weakness she hid her pain, and with unfailing courage rode along the chosen way, a fugitive in the land where she had reigned Queen.

Someone on the road recognised her, or one of her few followers fell out to be left behind and so earned the reward of betrayal. The men of the King were on her track and her flagging horse could go no farther. Its last effort was beyond its strength, it fell crashing to the ground and, flung over its head, Eleanora, Queen of England, in her soldier's dress, lay semi-conscious in the dust.

The soldiers showed no respect or mercy to either

her rank or her womanhood. We are told they dragged her back "very rudely" to where the King waited and she stood a prisoner in his power. Husband and wife they made a dramatic contrast, he in his robes, his nobles round him, she standing alone in tights and jerkin, her dress torn and mud-stained by her flight.

Yet her courage was unbroken, her pride undimmed. She was every inch a queen as she faced her husband, and he cowered before her.

All availed her nothing, however. As a prisoner she was taken back to England, travelling to Winchester where she was placed under the care of Ranulph de Glanville, the Governor of the Castle, who had strict orders not to let her escape.

For sixteen years, with the exception of one brief interval, Eleanora, the proud Duchess of Aquitaine, one time Queen of France, still Queen of England, remained a prisoner within Winchester's walls.

What those sixteen years' incarceration must have meant to Eleanora is difficult to describe adequately. She was so proud, she had been so impatient of all restraint, she had travelled almost the known world over, she had won the love of men in many distant lands. To shut her in that turret room was as the caging of an eagle. The marvel was her proud spirit did not break down.

Her wide intellect and varied interests saved her. The Governor of the Castle, de Glanville, was a soldier who had fought with distinction for Henry in Scotland, but he was greater as a lawyer and scholar. He was the first to write down a code of English Law, and his book *Glanville's Institutes* is a standard work still. Traditionally he wrote that at Winchester, discussing it with the captive Queen, and even if tradition is wrong there, we gather he talked to her of the state of the country, of the

injustice done to the people by the Norman game laws, and the brutality of many punishments. She listened, and for the first time forgot her sorrows in her pity for others. Surely the words the dying King of France had spoken so long before were remembered, and out of her desolation, the Queen's soul awoke. Through her fall and her poverty she came to her real greatness.

One pain there was no study, no thought for others could blot from her aching heart, and that was her grief at being parted from her sons. Prince Henry does not seem to have troubled about her fate . . . most certainly John did not . . . but Richard and Geoffrey protested strongly. That was her real comfort. All her thoughts and hopes, all her love, was centred on those gallant sons for whom her devotion grew the greater in absence and sorrow.

For twelve years that lonely captivity had been unbroken, then came tragedy. Prince Henry had died of fever, and Henry, who had loved him dearly, sent for the Queen to join him in Aquitaine, though still as a prisoner, rather than a Queen. Richard, hearing she was in France, advanced to rescue her, but before he could reach his mother she was hurried back to England to be shut up in Winchester again.

Again came tragedy. That third son, Geoffrey, who was so well loved, died by being thrown from his horse at a tournament, and almost as soon as news of the tragedy reached the Queen, she heard that his wife, Constance of Brittany, had given birth to a son a few weeks after his death.

From her Winchester prison Eleanora wrote to her daughter-in-law begging that the child might be named Geoffrey, but Constance, who had no love for the Queen, retorted she had named him Arthur instead. Arthur was the national hero of both England and Brittany, but he was not particularly popular with the Normans, and the name bestowed on the child by his mother's wilfulness was to alienate many who would have followed him in the later days.

It was about this time that Eleanora wrote a pathetic letter to the Pope, begging him to secure her release. Her one hope was to reach Aquitaine, her own country, which Richard was holding in her name. To be with him once more was the longing of her mother heart.

She was brave as we know, brave to fight in battle, to endure the strain of imprisonment, but in those dark days a new and dreadful shadow enveloped her. Henry was making no secret of his wish she would die. If that happened, he said in so many words, he would get the marriage of Princess Alice to Richard annulled and marry the lady himself. But Eleanora showed no signs of dying, and ways were known to secret poisoners by which unwanted lives might end. Though tempted, Henry did not sink so low as to employ assassins; yet it is impossible to escape the belief that some attempt was made on the life of the captive Queen, and though she escaped, she believed the Princess Alice had instigated the crime, which is more than probable.

Richard, insisting on the release of his mother, brought a greater force than before against his father, and by some bribe prevailed on Prince John to join him. The story goes that before leaving England to fight his elder son, the King called a scribe to bring him a list of those who were on the Queen's side. The list was brought, and the first name was that of Prince John, the son he had indulged and idolised.

Under the shock he fell into a fit, foaming at the mouth, tearing his hair, recovering only to curse Eleanora and the children she had borne him. Before leaving England, he summoned an artist and ordered him to paint a design showing an eaglet pecking out the eyes of the parent bird . . . the finished painting was to be sent to Prince John.

Whether the commission was executed we do not know, but the King went to Aquitaine to fight his sons, and before the struggle had well begun, died in

another seizure brought on by his anger against them.

By his own wish he was to be buried at the Abbey of Fontevrault, a house of the Benedictines to which he had given generously. Richard sent hasty word that he would attend the funeral, and gave orders that the King was to be taken to his grave with all Royal honour. The body was carried from Chinon where the death had occurred, wearing princely robes, a very splendid ring on the finger, a golden crown on the head, but before the funeral train had travelled far, mysterious robbers were at work. The corpse was stripped of all of value, and when the Abbey was reached, in an effort to obey the new King, those in attendance found a ring of small value which they put on the dead hand, and in place of the missing crown, bound about the dead King's forehead "a gold fringe torn from a lady's petticoat."

Apparently Richard did not notice anything amiss with the preparations and, directly his father was laid to rest, sent to England ordering that his mother should be set free, and appointing her Regent with full despotic powers until he could join her. What that liberation and honour meant to Eleanora we can imagine. The son from whom she had been parted those cruel sixteen years had not faltered in his devotion, and she came from her prison a Queen indeed, the whole kingdom at her feet to do with as she would.

She who had been frivolous and wilful, extravagant and cruel, from sheer thoughtlessness, showed herself truly great in this hour of her triumph. Her study of the English laws with de Glanville had not been in vain. An old MS. quoted by Tyrell tells us : "Queen Eleanora, directly she was liberated from her restraint in Winchester, was invested with full powers as Regent which she most beneficially

exercised, going in person from city to city, setting free all those confined for breach of forest laws, but accused of no further crime. (Here is the direct result of de Glanville's protests against the Norman game laws. E. V.) All who were outlawed for the same, she gave back to their wives and families, but all malefactors who were accused on good and lawful evidence, were to be kept in prison without bail."

Directly Richard reached England, he flung Glanville into Winchester's deepest dungeon, loaded with chains of incredible weight ; but as soon as the Queen Mother arrived he released his prisoner, evidently hearing of the consideration shown her, "and ever afterwards the King treated him with confidence."

Of Richard's love for his mother, as of hers for him, there is no doubt. Directly he was in full possession of the kingdom he settled an enormous dower upon her, besides giving back to her the land of Aquitaine which Henry had taken, and it is pleasant to be able to add that though the Queen Mother must have suffered many indignities during the days of her fall, she bore no malice. All her enemies were forgiven freely in this reunion, excepting only Princess Alice who was kept a prisoner in Rouen while Richard saw to it that his name-only marriage was annulled.

At his coronation he showed his devotion to his mother in the gesture of a gallant gentleman. It was important that the crowning should take place as quickly as possible, the date fixed was three weeks from his arrival in England, when it was discovered that the etiquette of strict mourning to be observed by the Queen Mother forbade her attending the ceremony. "If my mother cannot see me crowned no other woman shall do so," said the King, and forthwith issued orders that no woman was to be within the Abbey.

All Europe was flung into consternation by the news that the Saracens under Saladin, "Prince of Miscreants," had won back Jerusalem, which meant that all the land conquered by the Crusaders was on the verge of being lost, the sacred places defiled. Again the call for men to fight for the Holy Sepulchre, to plant the Cross where the Crescent flew, rang through Europe. Richard was amongst the first to volunteer, and Eleanora helped with money and men, with arms and advice. She shared his enthusiasm, his ardour, yet surely that name of his chief enemy stirred many emotions of which she could not speak to him, even if it were only an accidental resemblance.

When all was ready, he again appointed her Regent with full powers, but the country seeming fairly quiet, she went with him as far as Messina, on the way meeting Berengaria of Navarre, the gracious lady Richard loved. As he was free from the entanglement with Alice there was no reason why he should not marry her. Berengaria, duly chaperoned, sailed to the East with him, and though Eleanora turned back when they reached Sicily and the marriage was not celebrated until they landed at Cyprus, she gave them her blessing with all her heart. Her journey to England was comforted by her pride in her son, by her affection for his wife. She had no doubt happiness as well as fame lay ahead.

She was nearly seventy years of age when she took up the reins of Government in England again, but she showed no signs of age or weakness, "Ruling with great wisdom and popularity," as Matthew of Paris tells us.

She needed all her strength and discretion to guide the ship of State through the troublous times ahead. At once John began trying to wrest the power from her hands and to have himself proclaimed King. Bereaved by the absence of her beloved son,

oppressed by the knowledge of his constant danger, she had to face treachery and violence at home, to fight to keep his inheritance intact for the time when he should return. It was at this period she signed one of her letters "Eleanora, by the wrath of God, Queen of England."

Presently came news that all efforts on the part of the Crusaders to recapture Jerusalem had failed. The great adventure meant defeat for the Christians or, at the best, stalemate. A meeting between Richard and Saladin followed "in a flowery meadow near Mount Tabor," and there a lasting truce was signed. The two enemies shook hands and it is recorded how greatly Richard was attracted by the other man.

Whatever Eleanora's feelings concerning that meeting may have been, she was bitterly disappointed at the failure of the Crusade. Still, there was joy in the thought that Richard was returning and soon she could give to his keeping the Kingdom she had struggled to maintain for him. No one will ever know why he chose a round-about "overland route" for his journey instead of accompanying his wife by sea, but travel practically alone and through many countries, Richard did. According to one account a young page was his only companion.

Eleanora prepared her joyous welcome, but he did not come. No word reached her and after months of suspense and anxiety, she had to face the appalling thought that he had utterly disappeared in the heart of Europe . . . vanishing without a clue as though the earth had opened to swallow him.

That was when her brave heart almost gave way. She was facing despair greater than she had ever known, when they told her a minstrel named Blondel was at the palace door, begging he might see her. She knew the name, he had been Richard's friend, and ordered him to be brought at once, not daring to hope news might have come. But news it was.

Travel-stained and exhausted, Blondel told that well-known story of how, sure his loved master and friend was alive, he had wandered through the more remote parts of Europe entering the country of Leopold of Austria who was King Richard's enemy. Through the land the minstrel went, singing a song Richard had loved, and at last, from a dungeon in the heart of a castle in Styria, he had heard a voice take up the refrain and sing it with him. There was no doubt of the prisoner's identity. Blondel could have sworn to the voice anywhere, but also he heard from the guards that it was an Englishman, Leopold had thrust into that dreadful dungeon "from which no man had ever escaped," and kept loaded with chains.

Once the clue given her Eleanora was a woman of action again. Her ambassadors went to Vienna to discuss ransom with Leopold, and knowing the sum would be immense she set about collecting money without delay. It was then John made a final throw for the crown, actually approaching the French King with the suggestion that he himself would marry Princess Alice . . . the King being very anxious to find a husband for the lady. However, Eleanora had John brought before her, and terrible in her wrath, reduced him to a state of cringing terror by the taunts she hurled at him.

On hearing of Richard's imprisonment her first impulse had been to fly to him in Austria, but she knew that John would have taken the opportunity to seize the Kingdom, and once he was on the throne there would be no hope of raising the ransom required to set Richard free.

Letters of hers, written at this time to Pope Celestine, begging his aid, are extant, and few more poignant lines have ever been penned.

"Two sons were left me for my consolation, but now they only survive for my sorrow. Richard the King is in chains, while John wastes and devastates his captive

brother's lands with fire and sword. The Lord's hand is heavy on me. . . .

"If I leave my son's dominions, invaded as they are on every side by enemies, they will, on my departure, loose all counsel and solace. If I remain I shall not behold my son whose face I long to see. If I go to him there will be none to labour for his redemption, and what I fear most is that he will not survive all he has to endure. . . .

"I am no prophetess nor even a prophet's daughter, yet my sorrow foresees greater troubles in the future. That sorrow chokes the words I try to speak. Sobs impede my breath and close up the utterance that would express the thoughts of my soul."

Poor Queen, poor mother. She was never more truly Queen than now when she was all mother.

By superhuman efforts she raised the first instalment of the ransom Leopold demanded, crippling her resources almost to the last limit, and laying on England a heavy burden of taxation which was borne willingly for her sake and for her son's. There has never been an English king more popular than Richard of the Lion Heart, yet he had spent hardly any time on English soil. The glamour of romance surrounded him, but more than all else, I think, he owes his place in our English hearts to his mother. For the first time since the Conquest the poor and oppressed had found a generous patron, a wise and just ruler in her. The people loved her as she deserved to be loved, and saw the son she idolised through her eyes.

The money raised, and Prince John quelled for a time, Eleanora set out for Austria to free the King. We are told little of that reunion, which is as well, it was too sacred to be laid bare, but in joy and triumph mother and son returned to England, landing at Sandwich where she formally resigned the Regency and gave him back his Kingdom which she had kept for him "without diminution."

He had been greatly shocked at hearing of the trouble caused by Prince John, but had a perfect understanding of his brother's character. "John was not made for conquering kingdoms," he said with good-humoured contempt, and when the Queen Mother used her influence to bring her sons together and to get John to ask his brother's pardon, Richard's reply was typical again.

"I forgive you, John," he said, "and I wish I could forget your offence as easily as you will forget my pardon."

As Richard's marriage was childless, Eleanora advised him to appoint Arthur, son of his brother Geoffrey, his heir; indeed, according to modern law Arthur was in the direct succession to the throne. Richard, always ready to be guided by the Queen Mother, agreed at once, and letters went to Constance of Brittany asking that her child should be sent to England to be educated as the future king. With almost incredible folly Constance, urged by her dislike of her mother-in-law, refused to let the boy leave Normandy, at which there was an outburst of anger all round, and Richard named John his heir.

With this Queen Eleanora agreed reluctantly. She was full of forebodings as to what would happen under John's rule, yet could expect nothing but disaster if Arthur were King and his mother appointed Regent as she would have been considering his age. Constance ruling England was unthinkable, therefore the old Queen agreed that John must be his brother's heir. Of the two evils she chose that which seemed the lesser, though it is doubtful if her choice was right.

Soon after that appointment of his heir, King Richard died, and of all the blows his mother had had to bear this was the hardest. It might be said she never rallied from it. Giving the Government into the hands of King John she retired to Aquitaine, but even then, though she had passed her eightieth year, did not rest. A little later we find her travelling

to Spain to attend the marriage of her granddaughter, and on every hand appears proof of the vigour, yet justice with which she ruled her land. Under her it knew a period of prosperity and peace few countries experienced in the thirteenth century.

One more scene of turmoil and danger and injustice came to light with lurid grandeur the last years of this strangely splendid woman. She had had to bear bitter disappointment over the mad marriage of her surviving son, a story which will be told in the ensuing chapter, and exhausted by the strain of this fresh anxiety, she retired in the summer of 1201 to her palace of Mirabeau, an ancient town whose fortifications had fallen into ruin and whose citadel had become what may be described as a holiday home in connection with the palace.

There she hoped to gather fresh strength, but hardly had she established herself, than she was startled to learn an armed force was approaching the town with the intention of laying siege. Her men went out to make further enquiries, and returned to tell her the army was led by Hugh de Lusignan, who had good cause to dislike King John, and with him was her grandson Prince Arthur, for whom de Lusignan had sworn to win the English throne. Their first move in the campaign was to besiege Mirabeau and take the old Queen prisoner. With her in their hands they hoped to be able to dictate to John.

In all of which they reckoned without eighty-year-old Eleanora.

The fortifications might be more or less in ruin, but she manned them valiantly ; her garrison might be small, but she arranged the men to the best advantage. When the assault began, the besiegers took the outposts easily and gained the palace itself, but one tower remained in its strength, and to that the Queen retreated with the poor remnant of her

force. There she held out, while for once in his life John acted with energy and speed. A messenger had rushed to tell him of his mother's danger, but de Lusignan and Arthur took it for granted he would not trouble to come to her relief. In that they were mistaken. . . . Quite unexpectedly John appeared before the town, and after a brief fight young Arthur and de Lusignan were taken prisoners.

Arthur was brought before his grandmother. Apparently he begged her to help him, and the chroniclers, in their last word picture of the Queen, show her with her arm round the lad, facing King John and charging him by all he held sacred to swear he would do his nephew no harm. He took the oath, and afterwards shut Arthur up in the castle of Falaise where he seems to have been well treated.

That heroic defence of her poor fortress was the last flash of the Queen's war-like spirit. Finding her health frail she surrendered the government of Aquitaine to her son and retired to the monastery of Fontevrault where her husband was buried. Once in retirement her strength failed rapidly, but she wrote to John, reminding him of his promise Arthur should be safe, showing in many ways her concern for her dead Geoffrey's child. With her remote from the world, John felt safe to do as he wished, and the murder of young Arthur followed. Eleanora heard of the crime and sank under the shock. She died at prayer, one chronicler says, and was buried beside King Henry, the monument over her grave bearing her statue and showing her holding an open book as a tribute to her wide scholarship and literary gifts.

Strickland summed up her character wisely when she wrote: "Eleanora of Aquitaine is amongst the very few women who have atoned for an ill-spent youth by a wise and benevolent old age. As a sovereign she ranks amongst the greatest of all female rulers."

III

ISABELLA OF ANGOULÈME
THE QUEEN WHO JILTED HER LOVER

I SHALL be absent only a little while, a few weeks at the most, and when I return we can be married. After all the delay will be quite short though it will seem long to me," Hugh de Lusignan told the girl he held in his arms.

"As it will seem to me," she answered with a sigh and hid her fair face against his breast.

They made a striking couple as they stood in the turret chamber of Lusignan's castle which was his home. He, in his early manhood, was stalwart and strong as became a soldier sprung from a soldier race, his hair and eyes dark, his face so deeply tanned commonly he was known as "Hugh the Brown." She was barely fifteen, very fair with a beauty so great that afterwards she was celebrated in the songs of troubadours as the Helen of the Middle Ages. True her portrait which has come down to us from the statue over her tomb does not suggest transcendent loveliness according to our ideas, but standards of beauty vary, and in any case the sculptor was not able to reproduce the charms of vivid colouring or changing expression.

Undoubtedly Hugh de Lusignan found her beautiful and loved her with a passionate devotion she did not deserve. Yet their betrothal had been one of the ordinary business arrangements between their parents, and according to the custom, she, then a

little child, had been sent to Hugh's father, Count de la Marche, at Lusignan, that she might be educated there. The betrothal had lasted many years, but at the age of fourteen she was considered old enough to marry, the wedding day had been fixed, when John, King of England, sent word he would be passing close to Lusignan on his way to Aquitaine, whither he was going partly to visit his mother, but chiefly to receive the homage of the nobles as their liege lord on Queen Eleanora's behalf. Eleanora had warned the Count de la Marche of her son's approach and was pleased when in response the English king received a warm invitation to spend a few days' hunting at Lusignan. The Count had fought by the side of Cœur de Lion in Palestine, the two had been comrades in the fullest sense of the word, therefore the old Queen was anxious to bring about a friendship between him and her remaining son. Also she had another and more practical reason for wishing to secure the friendship of the Count. The lords of Lusignan were vassals of the French king, but their castle had stood close to the borders of Aquitaine and should bad blood be engendered they might prove very unpleasant neighbours indeed. Therefore there were many reasons why John should make the most of his brief visit to get on good terms with his hosts, and the visit must be very brief since he was hurrying to join his mother that he might be with her when messengers arrived from Portugal arranging for his marriage with a Portuguese princess. His embassy, asking for her hand, had arrived in Lisbon some time before and great results for the prosperity of England were looked for from that alliance which was considered a foregone conclusion.

So, no doubt, it would have been, if the Count de la Marche had not organised a hunting party in King John's honour, and there the English king had not seen the girl who was betrothed to Hugh the Brown.



ISABELLA OF ANGOULÈME
From the statue on her tomb at Fontevrault.

Riding in the midst of the gaily garbed noblemen, the King saw Isabella of Angoulême on her palfrey. Their eyes met, his warmed with passion as hers drooped shyly, but her lips smiled, and in that glance understanding flashed between the two. He asked who she was, and learned she was the betrothed wife of the Count's second son which should have made an effective barrier between them. A betrothal was considered as binding as marriage itself. No question of honour counted with King John, nor those of expediency either. He set aside his proposal for the Portuguese princess, his duty to his host, and incidentally that he had a wife in England though, as she had not been officially recognised and he had hardly seen her since he had obtained her fortune, no one considered her. He had met the inviting eyes of Isabella and meant to win her.

Directly after that meeting at the hunt, Hugh received orders to ride to Paris to see the French King on some point of etiquette connected with John's accession to Aquitaine. As Lusignan belonged to France it is difficult to see how John could have issued the order ; but apparently he managed to raise some point that required elucidation, so on the errand Hugh had to ride, his marriage postponed, his bride-to-be left behind. One of John's favourite books was the Old Testament . . . his taste in literature was excellent . . . and he may have remembered the story of Uriah the Hittite. Most probably he did.

So Hugh was holding Isabella in his arms, trying to console her for his absence and assuring her he would hasten back at the earliest possible moment.

"I, too, shall count the hours till you are here again," she told him sweetly and wished he would hurry to be gone.

He must not linger. Men at arms were gathered in the courtyard, his page was holding his ready-saddled horse. With a last kiss he tore himself away and I am sure Isabella leaned from a high window to wave him farewell as long as he was in sight.

When he had disappeared she set about arranging a secret meeting with King John.

The King's visit to Lusignan was a little longer than had been intended originally, and the Count de la Marche was extremely pleased, feeling he had made a good impression on his guest. When John left he was speeded by his host with every sign of goodwill, and Isabella stood demurely in the castle doorway by the side of her prospective father-in-law. In the meantime she had played her cards well. Though he had no objection to betraying his hospitable host, John had had no intention of marrying the girl, the claims of the Portuguese princess being too strong. But Isabella intended to be Queen of England, on no other terms could he have her, and she had her way. When he rode from the castle with all his glittering train, he went straight to Angoulême where he interviewed her parents, and the next move in the game was a letter written by her father to the Count de la Marche asking the girl might visit her old home for a few days while her betrothed was in Paris.

The Count gave his consent willingly, and Isabella set out on her journey, flushed with excitement that was not caused by the prospect of seeing her parents. The border of Aquitaine had been crossed, they were quite near the city of Angoulême, when a band of armed men blocked their way and the leader demanded the girl should be given up to them.

The demand was refused, a brief struggle followed, and the strangers were victorious. Isabella was torn from her saddle to be held in front of the leader on his horse, and so he carried her away, "screaming wildly with terror," as one account says.

We may give her the benefit of the doubt and believe she was abducted against her will, or that she did not know exactly what was to happen, and her terror was real in consequence. It is impossible, however, to acquit her parents of complicity in the particularly mean plot, and there is little doubt she wanted to be a Queen.

Never did an abduction and subsequent wedding cause more consternation. Queen Eleanora was prostrate at the treachery and all its possible results. Portugal, from being a warm ally, became an enemy of England. Its King was not likely to forget the insult to his daughter. The Count de la Marche was furious at the duplicity of his guest, and Hugh the Brown, riding home in hot haste, refused to believe Isabella's guilt. He loved her still and would marry her in spite of a thousand Kings of England, he said, but he would make John pay dearly for the betrayal.

This he swore on his most sacred oath, and he kept his word.

Hugh's first act was to send a challenge to King John to meet him in mortal combat ; but against all the rules of chivalry, John replied that if Hugh wanted to fight he would appoint a champion to meet him. The answer was a contemptuous refusal. De Lusignan said he knew the champions of the King of England were paid assassins no gentlemen could meet in the lists.

With his Queen, the King came to England, where she was crowned at Westminster with great ceremony. There is in existence a document which gives the expenses of the coronation, detailing how thirty-three shillings were paid to Clement Fitzwilliam for strewing fresh herbs and rushes in Westminster Hall, and Eustace the Chaplain and Ambrose the songster twenty-four shillings between them for singing a hymn.

In the spring of the following year the King and Queen had an awakening from the lethargy of voluptuousness in which "she held him as if by magic or sorcery," though it is unfair to lay all the blame on her shoulders. She made no effort to improve his outlook, and their general mode of life scandalised all about the Court. There were days of hard living and harder fighting, days when men rose with the

dawn, had breakfast at five in the morning, dinner at half-past ten and the final meal about four o'clock, when Parliament met and the Courts of Justice assembled not later than six so that all the business of the day was expected to be over by noon. Yet John declined to get up until that hour, when he would appear out of his wife's room, apparently quite unmoved by the impatience and contempt with which he was greeted.

The news that startled him into some semblance of energy was that Hugh de Lusignan had been working in secret through the months. Now he had declared himself in favour of young Arthur, and had raised an army with the intention of putting the prince on the English throne. By the time John was in France another shock awaited him. Queen Eleanora was besieged in her castle of Mirabeau by her grandson and de Lusignan, the idea being to take her prisoner and only give her up if Isabella was surrendered to Hugh.

In the story of Queen Eleanora it was told how that indomitable old lady held out in the face of overpowering odds, till the forces of King John appeared to relieve the siege. What was omitted there however, was that in addition to Prince Arthur, de Lusignan and practically all his followers fell into the hands of King John, and that monarch's first idea was to hang them all in rows from Mirabeau battlements, however many there might be. Against that Queen Eleanora protested however, just as she had protested that Arthur must be spared, and John had sufficient respect for his mother to change his plans. Arthur he sent to Falaise, as has been said, most of de Lusignan's soldiers he hanged or mutilated, but Hugh and twenty-two knights he decided to take with him to England.

Their progress through France was one long martyrdom for the wretched men who were loaded with chains and, once in England, far enough from his mother not to fear her influence, he sent the

twenty-two knights to Corfe Castle where they were starved to death—his favourite manner of punishing his enemies. For Hugh de Lusignan a still more dreadful fate, if one could be devised by devilish ingenuity, was intended, and he was taken to Bristol Castle to await his doom in a particularly loathsome dungeon. Exactly what happened we do not know. It is said Isabella used her influence with her husband to save her one-time lover, but considering insane jealousy was one of John's weaknesses, it is far more probable the Queen went to work in secret. At least Hugh escaped further torture and later was set free, returning to France, more than ever convinced that Isabella was sinned against, not sinning. If it is true she contrived his freedom—and it is difficult to see how else he could have got away—it is one of the few good deeds to be laid to her credit.

After the death of Queen Eleanora, the last controlling influence towards common decency was taken from John's life and the only charitable conclusion is that he became a raving maniac. No sane man could have been guilty of the incredible horrors laid to his charge beyond the shadow of doubt, and, as well as overwhelming crimes, he was guilty of petty vices. To his wife he was extraordinarily mean, limiting her expenses and the number and materials of the clothes she might buy, while his own dress was the last word in extravagance. At one Christmas festival he wore a mantle of red satin embroidered with rubies and sapphires, a tunic of white damask, a girdle set with sapphires and garnets, the baldric crossing his right shoulder to sustain his sword blazing with diamonds and emeralds. He wore white gloves of which one was adorned with a ruby of great size and the other with a sapphire of corresponding brilliance. To quote Strickland: "He supplied his extravagance by a degree of corruption which proves him insensible to every feeling of honour, and actually left records whereby we are enabled to read such entries as the following ludicrous specimens of

bribery. ‘ Robert de Vaux gave five of his best palfreys that the King might hold his tongue about Henry Pinel’s wife.’ ”

What the scandal about the lady might have been we do not know, but plainly John added blackmail to his other crimes.

Marriage to such a creature could not bring happiness and Isabella paid bitterly for having betrayed de Lusignan. Of whom John was particularly jealous is not known, but in a document he sent to the Moorish King of Spain, he accused her of adultery and told with gusto how he had killed three men who were her lovers and left them hanging over her bed.

His greatest crime was the murder of the Braose family; in all the annals of horror it has never been surpassed for cold-blooded, devilish inhumanity. After the birth of Isabella’s first child (1207), a boy, who was to become Henry III, John returned from France to find his barons in unrest over his extravagance. To that he retorted by ordering that the nobles should each send their eldest child, whether boy or girl, to him as hostages, and the remarkable thing is that nearly all obeyed. Rather surprisingly the children seem to have been well treated, being kept about the Court to wait upon the Queen and attend her in procession when she travelled.

One of the barons, however, William de Braose, lord of Bramber Castle, refused to send his young son to the King, on which John gave way to one of his wild fits of anger—fits in which he had the habit of gnawing his finger-tips until the blood ran. When he recovered some approach to calmness, he sent for his confidential servant, Peter de Mauluc, who seems to have been almost as unpleasant as his master. It was an open secret that he had been one of those in charge of Prince Arthur at Falaise, and rumour said his was the actual hand which had struck the blows that sent the lad to his death.

Now de Mauluc was dispatched to Bramber to

demand the Braose child, and seeing him Lady de Braose, herself a Norman gentlewoman of the highest birth, lost all self-control.

"What, give my child into your care?" she exclaimed. "For you to take to the King who murdered his dead brother's son. Never."

Her husband tried to stay her flow of words in vain. Probably she was hysterical in her terror for her child, terror which grew the greater as she saw the look darken in de Mauluc's wicked face, and she said a very great deal more than she would have uttered in her saner moments.

De Mauluc rode away, a very cowered but angry man, to seek his royal master and repeat all Lady de Braose had said, probably adding strength and colour of his own. Infuriated, John sent men to besiege Bramber, but they found the castle empty of those they sought. The Baron and his family had fled. Doggedly the King ordered them to be hunted down, and at long last they were discovered at Meath in Ireland where they had hoped to find sanctuary. That hope was vain. From Meath they were brought back to England, the husband and wife and their five little children, the youngest a new-born baby. King John waited for them at Old Windsor, the stronghold beside the river, of which much remained, although the castle had risen on the hill. And in Old Windsor the whole family were shut away in a dark dungeon and left to die of starvation. As if it were possible to increase the horror, there is a tradition that John had a hole made in the roof of the cell, at which he sat for days enjoying the despairing groans of the parents, the anguished sobs of the doomed children.

Other children were born to Isabella, a second son named Richard who became the first Duke of Cornwall and is believed to have had the best qualities of all her children, and three daughters, but of her mother-love we can find small trace. She kept her eldest son near her because he was heir to the throne,

but seems to have had little interest in the others. In the year 1212 she was in disgrace with her husband; probably it is to this time that the incident of hanging her supposed lovers belongs, and we find her in prison at Normandy, separated from her children and raging at her deprivation of liberty. Thus she was abroad when the affair of Matilda Fitzwalter shocked England and brought about the downfall of the King.

Strictly speaking the story of Matilda the Fair, as she was called, does not belong to that of the Queen Mother, but because of the influence it exercised over the entire country, it may be included here, apart from the fact that for its own sake it is worth telling.

As the daughter of one of the most important of the barons, Matilda had to appear at Court in the train of Queen Isabella; which meant the King saw her, and, struck by her beauty, at once proposed to become her lover. Probably she knew the story of the Braose horror, but at least she had no desire for the attentions of King John, and fled from Court, with the result that again he gnawed his fingers and swore a thousand oaths he would never rest until she was in his power.

That is definite history, just as it is beyond question that for three years she contrived to hide from him, three years during which he never relaxed his search, his anger and vindictiveness growing from his disappointment. History is blank as to her whereabouts during those years, however; but legend steps in, and Bishop Percy, the antiquary, was convinced as the result of his researches that Matilda the Fair, who fled from King John, was that Maid Marian who won the love of our national hero Robin Hood in the green glades of Sherwood.

As Bishop Percy traced the story, Matilda had escaped from the King with a few faithful followers.

He suggests a picture of the frightened girl taking the northward road in search of sanctuary, knowing men-at-arms were on her track, afraid to shelter in monastery or castle lest she should be betrayed. At last the fugitives were lost in Sherwood's heart, when suddenly they found themselves surrounded by a band of outlaws in Lincoln green, their bows on their backs, cloth yard shafts in their quivers. Their leader bade them have no fear, he and his men did not war with women, and that night the girl who had fled from the love of a king, slept safely in a cave—there are many caves in Sherwood—guarded by Robin Hood, with Little John and Will Scarlet and the rest, lulled by the music of the harp of Allan-a-Dale.

When morning came she and Robin Hood walked together under the spreading oaks. Love was confessed ; we may presume they called in jolly Friar Tuck to marry them, and later, because he felt she had been too gently nurtured to withstand the hardships of forest life in the winter, Robin Hood built a house of stone for his wife in a secluded dale of unrivalled beauty. To-day, in North Yorkshire, close to the little town of Robin Hood's Bay, stands an old, old house in the heart of Fyling Dale, a house with an ancient stone staircase and queer little windows that look out now on to a farm. The coastline of railway runs near it, Fyling Halt or station is but a stone's throw away, and that old, old house, tradition asserts, is the actual building raised by Robin to shelter the woman he loved.

The whole district abounds with Robin Hood legends even apart from the name of the neighbouring town, and all go to suggest his connection with Fyling Old Hall as the house is named. Its age and its interest are so great, it is unfortunate no serious attempt seems to have been made to preserve it for the nation.

For two or three years Matilda the Fair certainly remained in hiding, then the rest of her story becomes

history again. In some way the King's spies traced her to her hiding-place and, should Bishop Percy's theory be true, Fyling Old Hall was the scene of a desperate fight as the men Robin had left in charge struggled to defend their mistress. It was in vain. Matilda was dragged from her refuge and carried back to London to be imprisoned on one of the four small turrets which crown the White Tower; it is called Matilda's Prison still. There John visited her to renew his suit, but utterly in his power as she was, knowing his brutality as she did, the girl found courage to defy him. She died of poison in the Tower, generally said to have been given her in a poached egg served for breakfast, but afterwards her remains were taken to her father's seat, at Dunmow in Essex, for burial.

In Dunmow church the monument bearing her effigy may be seen still.

Frantic at her fate, her father raised revolt against King John. The sealing of Magna Charta is believed to have been the direct result of the girl's tragedy and, as the Earl of Albemarle, then Lord of Scarborough, was Fitzwalter's ally throughout, it is not too wide a conjecture to suggest that Robin Hood himself and the men of Fyling Dale brought special influence to bear in the work of vengeance.

Isabella was set free from her Norman prison and returned to her children in England, but her home life, if such it could be called, showed no improvement. John was more frightfully insane than ever, and at this time he actually sent an embassy to Muhammed-an-Nasir, the Moorish King of Spain, asking for his alliance and offering to become a Mohammedan if help were given. Matthew of Paris, who tells the story, says that Muhammed asked for a description of John and was told: "The King is about fifty years of age, his hair is quite hoary, his

figure made for strength, compact but not tall. His Queen hates him and is hated by him, being an evil-minded and adulterous woman. . . .”

The Moslem King did not come to terms. Probably he had discovered how little John was to be trusted.

After Magna Charta matters became worse than ever. Having set his seal to the reforms, the King promptly broke his word. Civil War broke out, the madman gathered an army and roamed up and down the land, fighting, murdering, plundering, destroying. He danced with devilish glee to see men die by torture and places burn, and had the habit of setting fire with his own hands each morning to whatever house had sheltered him in the night.

Isabella had fled from him, taking her children with her, and had found shelter at Gloucester when the last act in the King's Tragedy was played to its finish. With the army of the avenging barons hot on his track to end his mad career, he tried to cross the fens with an enormous train of baggage animals, carrying his jewelled garments and the regalia of England. The tide rose unexpectedly, running in with appalling swiftness as it does on such flat shores, with the result the whole convoy was overwhelmed and the treasure buried deep under the fens.

Drenched to the skin the King managed to reach Swinshead Abbey, plainly very ill but ravenously hungry and in a furious temper at the loss of his treasure. A rich meal was set before him. He ate glutonously, finishing up with a liberal dessert of peaches and new cider, laughing devilishly the while, talking of how he would make the whole country suffer for his loss. “I'll lay all the land waste,” he exulted in the midst of his gorge. “The people shall die of starvation right and left. A halfpenny loaf shall cost a shilling.”

The next morning he was “roughly handled by dysentery,” says Matthew of Paris, and rumour insisted he had been poisoned by a monk who had waited on him at his feast. That was never proved,

but if the crime of the poisoner can be justified, surely it was this was the case.

They carried him to Newark where he died, begging he might be taken to Worcester Cathedral and be buried near the shrine of the Saxon bishop, St. Wilstan, whose piety he much admired!!

Probably the most savage epitaph ever penned was that written by a contemporary historian. "Hell felt itself defiled by the presence of King John."

News of her widowhood was brought to Isabella in Gloucester Castle, a stronghold considered so impregnable she had hoped to be able to hold it if her husband should have marched against her. His death freed her from that fear, and her first thought was to secure the crown for her nine-year-old son. She acted promptly with the aid of the Earl of Pembroke, to whom, probably, much of the credit is due.

Young Henry must be crowned without delay in Gloucester Cathedral they decided, and heralds were sent round the city proclaiming the boy king. The coronation date was fixed, it was nine days after the death of John, and then came difficulty. No crown was at hand to be used in the ceremony. The regalia belonging to John had been lost in the Wash, and the more historic and sacred crown of the Confessor was in Westminster. Time was too precious to allow its being sent for, and earl and bishop alike were baffled.

Isabella's woman's wit came to their aid. Amongst her possessions was a golden collar, apparently one that fitted close to her throat and was not a necklace in the usual sense of the words. That golden collar resting on the boy's head, sufficiently resembled a crown to pass muster, and in Gloucester Cathedral a frightened lad looking around the great building with nervous, questioning eyes, duly had his mother's

collar placed on his hair and so was crowned King of England.

When other boy kings had ascended the throne, their mothers had been proclaimed as Regents during their minority and Isabella expected such power would be given her. Eager for it, she showed herself devoted to her little son as never before, but only to be disappointed. The English people had sympathised with her in the tragedy of her marriage, but the English barons had no opinion of her trustworthiness and, passing over her claims, appointed Pembroke and Hugh de Burgh as joint Regents.

Furious at the slight, Isabella forgot her newly professed mother love, and leaving the boy king and her other children in England, went back to her native city, where she took care she should meet Hugh de Lusignan again. He was now the Count de la Marche, his father and elder brother both being dead.

Again that beauty of hers, that sex appeal, worked their magic. Hugh's love had never died. Through the years, he had never lost his belief in her innocence, and their long-delayed marriage was arranged. Isabella wrote to her son in England a letter that has been described as a masterpiece of hypocrisy, telling him that she was becoming the wife of her old lover solely for England's sake . . . if she refused him he might marry a French princess which would mean his closer alliance with the French King.

"We ourselves have married the Count de la Marche, and God knows we did this rather for your benefit than for our own," is the exact wording of her letter. *"Wherefore we entreat you, dear son, that this may be pleasing to you, seeing that it conduces greatly to your profit. And we earnestly pray you will restore the castles of Niort in Poitou and of Exeter and Rockingham in England, which your father, our former husband, bequeathed to us."*

The young King, or rather his advisers, refused to restore the castles, on which Isabella urged her

husband to besiege Niort and take it by force. Henry's attitude towards his Queen Mother is shown by a letter he wrote to the Pope asking that she might be forbidden all benefit from Church and clergy and calling her "a Judas woman." The Pope, horrified at such a request made by a son about his mother, decided Isabella had been wrongfully deprived of her jointure on which she obtained her castles and their revenues.

Isabella's second marriage was almost as tragic a failure as her first. Having recovered her fortune her pride and arrogance knew no bounds. As Count de la Marche, Hugh was vassal to the King of France; but Isabella goaded him into rebellion, declaring she "disdained to be the wife of any man who knelt before another."

A fierce and desperate war, in which England was involved, was the direct result of her interference; but the French, led by Louis IX, who has been called "the real hero of the Middle Ages, a King as brave as he was pious," were victorious everywhere, and when her cause was lost, Isabella fled to Paris to throw herself on her knees before Louis and beg for mercy. Again she did not show herself in a good light. She had ruined her husband, she had brought her son's kingdom to the verge of bankruptcy, but her thought was for herself.

Her husband joined her at the French Court. Her arrogance had estranged his people, he had had to contend against revolt at home as well as enemies abroad, and ruined, disgraced, dragged to the dust, he begged the French King to accept his homage again.

For two years he and Isabella remained at the French Court, practically penniless dependents, but treated with all honour by the generous King. The kindness bit into Isabella's proud heart, she hated the man who was heaping coals of fire on her head, and planned how he could be removed. Once he was dead her husband might regain his lands in the confusion that would follow to a certainty.

Louis was taken ill, the result of poison, and though he struggled back to life he had been very close to the border. Isabella raged in secret at the failure of her scheme, but amongst her servants found one who was ready to make another attempt on the King's life, this time with a dagger. That attempt failed also, but as they dragged him away to his doom, the man shouted that Isabella, Queen Mother of England, was the real criminal. She had paid him to commit murder.

On that old and very unfair presumption that a husband must be responsible for all his wife does—it remains on our statutes still—a congress of nobles and prelates was called at Poitou to decide whether or not Hugh should be arraigned for the crime. Isabella was not summoned to attend, but she was too anxious to know what was happening to stay away. Also, quite probably, she relied on her beauty to influence the congress in her favour.

Dressed in her richest garments, she rode on a gaily caparisoned palfrey to the Hall, around her all the retainers she could muster, also clad in gay colours. So, in state, she appeared at the entrance, a defiant, arrogant woman; but, to her chagrin, was not allowed to enter. Refusing to be turned away, she remained in the porch on her horse, looking in at the solemn congress, listening to what was said. Apparently some evidence proved her guilt beyond all question, and changed her proud defiance into abject fear. Suddenly she turned her horse, clattered from the porch and fled alone no one knew whither.

She found shelter at Fontevrault where Eleanora and Henry II were buried, and where the Benedictines kept a suite of rooms ready for the use of any royalties that might seek rest and care in either mental or physical trouble. Panic was upon her. She writhed on the floor in terror, she tore her wimple from her head, she dragged at her loosened hair, and seizing a dagger threatened to plunge it into her heart. When that was taken from her, she

begged the monks would hide her in "the secret chamber," which they did, and, says Matthew of Paris, "here she lived while the Poictevins and the French called her Jezebel, because they considered her the cause of the late disastrous war."

Hugh de la Marche was accused of the attempted murder of the French King, but, apparently, his innocence was proved. A ruined man, he was set free to join the last Crusade and died fighting in the Holy Land.

Isabella became a professed nun and seems to have lived her last years in penance. When she died she asked that she might be buried in a humble grave in the public cemetery, but later when Henry III visited the abbey he raised a splendid monument in her memory though it did not cover the spot where she had been laid.

As Queen Mother she cared little for any of her children, using Henry only as a pawn in the game she played to obtain fresh power, and being indifferent to the others. After her death, however, the four children of her second marriage, three sons and a daughter, came to England, and, to the indignation of his nobles who wanted to have no more to do with Isabella or her offspring, King Henry provided for them with lavish generosity. It was said later that "their names were connected with most of the evils of his troubled reign."

The evil done by Isabella of Angoulême lived after her, in the pride and greed and rapacity of her children.

IV

ELEANOR OF PROVENCE THE QUEEN IN WHOSE HONOUR LONDON'S STREETS WERE CLEANED

ALL London was prepared to make holiday, the excitement being caused chiefly by the remarkable occurrence of the streets being cleaned although it was midwinter. Apparently in the hot weather some efforts at scavenging had to be made, even in the thirteenth century, but during the rest of the year mud and garbage were allowed to lie about, with the result that even main thoroughfares were knee-deep in filth. This unwonted cleanliness was in honour of the young Queen Eleanor of Provence who, after having been married at Canterbury was coming to Westminster for her crowning. Without wishing to disparage the loyalty of London's citizens, it may be suggested that the unusual efforts were quite as much for their own sakes as for hers. On the January day which was to see the coronation, all London would be out of doors, sight-seeing. The streets were to be hung with flags and through them, in stately procession, would ride the City Fathers, three hundred and sixty strong, each carrying a cup of either gold or silver and mounted on a horse with a new saddle, richly caparisoned. As these three hundred and sixty gentlemen would be wearing new clothes of silk and velvet, it was desirable the streets should be fairly clean that no mud might be splashed on the gay garments or trappings.

It was nearly twenty years since Henry, a little boy of nine, had been crowned in Gloucester cathedral with his mother's golden collar, and during those years he had proposed to no fewer than five princesses, and the last having accepted him, he had been actually betrothed, when he had read a poem written by the young Provençal Princess who was acknowledged as an accomplished poetess and musician before she entered her teens. So impressed was he that he jilted the other lady there and then and insisted Eleanor of Provence should be his wife, though she was almost dowerless, and his country was on the verge of ruin.

The only portrait we have of Eleanor is taken from an ancient stained-glass window, and even that has disappeared. An artist, however, made a drawing of the old picture, but whether he followed the original faithfully or not seems doubtful. His effort shows a simpering lady with very large eyes and very small mouth, of the type to be found in Victorian Books of Beauty. Still, Eleanor may have been simpering, and so far as I know no record remains of her height. My impression is of a little woman, with appealing eyes and a rather clinging manner. She was a perfectly faithful wife, devoted to the husband who worshipped her, but during her own time it was said that no man could resist her. To use old-fashioned slang, she simply twisted them one and all round her little finger, and so great did this very feminine appeal become that she was called a sorceress and stoned as a witch.

That stoning, however, happened many years after the day of her coronation, when the City made so brave a display in her honour, and when the ceremony in the Abbey was ended a gay company sat down to feast in Westminster Hall. A wonderful banquet that was, according to Matthew of Paris, who was one of the guests. "Why need I describe the profusion of dishes that furnished the table, the abundance of venison, the variety of fish, the diversity of wine,

the gaiety of the jugglers and the comeliness of the attendants?" he wrote. "Whatever the world could produce of beauty or delight was there conspicuous."

The ladies and gentlemen of the Court made a brave show. Henry had inherited his father's love of finery, but while King John had decked himself out, yet had expected his wife to be content with a plain cloth gown, King Henry loved to lavish gifts on his young Queen. It was reckoned that within a short time of her marriage, he had spent thirty thousand pounds on jewels and finery for her, an enormous sum as money was counted then. For instance, we learn from existing records that she had "nine chaplets for her hair, all of gold filigree set with jewels, and for State occasions a great crown glorious with gems."

Her head was turned by this splendour. She was in her early teens and had been educated in what we should describe as the happy-go-lucky atmosphere of artistic circles. Naturally she did not understand the value of money, neither did her husband, with the result they became the most extravagant and poverty-stricken pair who ever sat on the English throne. Injustice and extortion followed, evils of all descriptions, due to misgovernment, were rife; but looking back at this much-hated Queen, it is easy to make excuses for her folly and to realise how much goodness, how much of warm-hearted loyalty, lay beneath her frivolity.

Her affection for her own people was very strong. In an age when families were divided by indifference if not by actual hate, and brother fought against brother, it was counted a sin to her that she tried to help her relations. Granted she did not go to work wisely, and granted also that those she brought to England were greedy alike for money and power, the fact remains that her generous affection brought them over here to prey on England. Some of the first to arrive were her three uncles, of whom William

became the chief adviser to the King, and Peter the Earl of Richmond and Warrene with a place of importance in the Council; while Peter of Savoy, a priest, was enthroned as Archbishop of Canterbury and given a magnificent palace in the Strand. We call the site covered by his mansion and its grounds the Savoy to this day.

Throughout his reign Henry had been engaged in the pious work of rebuilding Westminster Abbey, which had been little better than a ruin at his accession. For years his studies had centred around the life and works of St. Edward the Confessor and his admiration for the Saxon king increased as his knowledge grew. When a son was born to Queen Eleanor, her husband decided to christen him Edward, and thus the name so familiar to us first came into use in the Royal line after the Conquest.

Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, had been a warm friend of the young King and Queen, but while Eleanor had been absent from Court a change had come. It was discovered that de Montfort was the lover of the King's sister, a young widow who had been married to that Earl of Pembroke who had assisted at the crowning of Henry at Gloucester. Since Pembroke's death she had decided to go into a convent, and had taken some of the earlier vows when it was discovered there were very good reasons why her marriage with de Montfort was desirable. Henry being appealed to, spent enormous sums in obtaining the necessary dispensation from the Pope to allow the wedding to take place. That was done while Eleanor was in retirement and for some reason she had been violently opposed to the whole affair, probably she did not "get on" with her sister-in-law and thought the money might have been better spent. It was very, very seldom Henry acted in opposition to her wishes, but he did so in this case and trouble followed.

When the time for her "churching" arrived, the King, according to custom, invited a great gathering

of high-born ladies to accompany her to the ceremony. She stood in their midst, a girl mother with her baby in her arms—she was just eighteen—smiling at the friends around her, when into the hall strode de Montfort, impressive, dictatorial, yet gallant, leading his newly married wife by the hand.

The young Queen looked at her sister-in-law in haughty displeasure, and in spite of that clinging appeal of her usual manner she could be very haughty at times. I fancy that haughtiness was reserved for women, the men she influenced so easily saw only the other side of her character.

"What has happened to bring you here in that dress?" she demanded, indicating the regal robes the Countess wore. "I thought you were in a nunnery and there you should have remained if you kept your vows."

Apparently the Countess screamed at the insult, certainly the Earl swore, and Eleanor appealed to her husband—"appealed" being absolutely the right word. Of course Henry yielded to her at once. As is the way with weak men who know they have been in the wrong, he broke into furious anger, called de Montfort the seducer of his sister and threatened to order the servants to turn him out of the palace.

De Montfort waited for no violence, though he must have been tempted to call his men and make a fight. Instead, with real dignity and self-control, he took his wife away, but as he went he looked back at the young Queen, vowing some day she should pay for the insult. He kept his word, and, though the Civil War he was to bring about was still far off, who shall say how much his influence and that of his Countess was to blame for the dislike the nation at large poured on the Queen.

Eleanor's second child, a girl named Margaret, was born two years after Prince Edward, and about

that time Henry was called to France to join his stepfather, de Lusignan, in that revolt against the King of France. The Queen Mother, Isabella, now de Lusignan's wife, had brought about the trouble, and Eleanor had used her influence to induce Henry to take arms for his mother. Neither the King nor the Queen was in the least bloodthirsty, when their enemies fell into their hands they let them go unharmed, another point to her credit, and we may be sure she had a shuddering horror of war. Yet because her love for her own mother was so strong, it seemed unthinkable that Henry should not support his mother in the struggle. So the die was cast, and English lives and English gold went to bolster up the absurd claims of a foolish and selfish woman.

Defeat followed. While the Queen Mother went to Paris to throw herself on the mercy of King Louis and plot his assassination, Eleanor and Henry fled to Bordeaux. There they remained throughout the winter, having what may be described as a very good time, and there her second daughter, Princess Katharine, was born. That stay at Bordeaux was another of the crimes laid to the Queen's charge, yet considering she had three little children with her, including a new-born baby, surely she might be forgiven for avoiding so long a journey at such a time of year. Crossing the Bay of Biscay in the cockleshell craft of the times would have meant hardship and danger beyond description.

In the spring they returned to England, resting a few days at Portsmouth where they landed. London was their destination and Henry sent out couriers ordering that the inhabitants of every town through which they had to pass must come out to greet them, the mayors and high officials on horseback in their robes, the poorer people scattering flowers. If the King had returned triumphant, loaded with wealth, the conqueror of new lands, he could not have had a more enthusiastic welcome to all seeming. Bitter frowns there must have been, muttered curses and

moans of discontent at the added taxes and general hardship which prevailed, but all that was behind the scenes, and foolish Henry and Eleanor, with their little children, rode proudly to the capital, bowing and smiling and scattering alms as if all was well.

With them they had brought back the Queen's youngest sister, Cincia, that she might be married to Henry's brother, Richard, Duke of Cornwall—again Eleanor was helping her relations—and with them also had come the Countess of Brabant, the mother of the two girls. In the reunion with her mother and sister the Queen was very happy, her own three little children became a double joy, and probably that arranged welcome in every town with its burghers on horseback and its people strewing flowers was in order to impress the guests. She wanted her own people to see England at its best and to believe all was well.

On reaching London the wedding of Princess Cincia and the Duke of Cornwall was duly solemnised, and at the following banquet we are told thirty thousand dishes were served. All was very delightful for those taking part, only unfortunately there was no money in the Royal exchequer to pay one-tenth of the expenses. Not that that troubled the King or Queen, they simply looked round for some means by which money could be raised and decided to make the Jews pay what was required. All over the kingdom the extortion went on. In the north a Jew named Aaron of York had to disburse four hundred marks in gold and four thousand in silver, and those in London were forced to contribute as largely. As if the paying for the wedding and providing a dowry for the bride was not enough for the English people to do, before she returned to her own land the Countess of Brabant coolly borrowed four thousand marks from her son-in-law, a sum neither she nor her husband ever attempted to repay. The King gave it gladly, because, as Matthew of Paris tells us,

"he thought he could never do enough to testify his love for the Queen and her family."

That was an amiable weakness, but the amiability had an ugly side. The persecution of the Jews went on all through the reign ; to it belongs the appalling horror of Hugh of Lincoln, the story of a Christian child the Jews were said to have crucified. Twenty were hanged and hundreds brought to beggary, yet there is not a shred of evidence to prove the story. Though Henry may have believed it—probably he did—there is little doubt it was invented as an excuse for violence and robbery.

In all Eleanor bore her husband nine children, three girls, Margaret, Katharine and Beatrice, and six boys, and though those were times when family ties were slack she was a devoted mother throughout, and her children loved her with a whole-hearted affection which never changed. That love for her children and her husband must be weighed in the balance against her follies.

Having been so wildly extravagant, not only in their personal expenditure but by involving the country in ruinous wars, the King and Queen came up against real hardship. When things were at their worst Isabella, the Queen Mother, died in her secret cell at Fontevrault, and her handsome fortune reverted to the use of Queen Eleanor as consort. That should have settled the debts of the Royal pair and restored them to comfort, but the Queen's mother, that very rapacious Countess of Brabant, rushed over to England as soon as she heard what had happened, and so worked upon Eleanor's affection and Henry's weakness, that she returned home carrying practically the whole fortune with her.

After that matters went from bad to worse. Parliament being appealed to, refused a fresh grant, and being unable to pay the officers of the Chapel Royal we find the King pawning a valuable statue of the Holy Virgin, stipulating, however, that it should be "deposited in a decent place." He and



ELEANOR OF PROVENCE

From a stained glass window of contemporary work. Originally the window was in the parish church at Bexhill in Sussex, but in the eighteenth century it came into the possession of Horace Walpole to form part of his collection at Strawberry Hill. From that the present drawing was made by G. P. Harding.

the Queen stayed in London for a time, expecting the citizens to pay all expenses, and when that had been done asking them for a money gift as well. Even then he was not satisfied so ordered a fortnight's fair to be held in Tothill Fields, during which time no merchant in London was to open his shop or sell his wares. Queen Eleanor was blamed for the injustice and perhaps rightly, there is something very feminine about the arrangement. It is so exactly what a foolish woman, not seeing beyond the moment, might be expected to suggest.

The fair not being the success hoped, the King and Queen, with their children and their friends, were in the habit of arriving at meal-times at the houses of noble or rich merchants and inviting themselves to stay to eat and drink. That done they expected to receive a present in money before they left ; indeed Henry went further, and whenever he met any person of importance would ask for a gift, saying : "It would be a greater act of charity to bestow money on him who was the King than on those who went from door to door begging for alms."

When little Princess Margaret was ten years old it was arranged she should be married to the boy King of Scotland, Alexander III, just two years older ; indeed the betrothal had been sealed seven years before, and had been instrumental in averting a war with Scotland. There was the usual difficulty concerning money, but this time the Archbishop of York stepped into the breach, offering to defray all the expenses, so to York the Royal party went, and there the two children were married. When she saw her little girl carried away to Scotland the Queen shed many bitter tears and her sobs were echoed by her little daughter. The two loved each other dearly, and this was the first break in the family circle.

A revolt in Guienne, one of the English possessions in France, called Henry overseas with his army, and before leaving he appointed Eleanor Regent with full power, though as her health was not good just then, she was expecting another child, he arranged with his brother, Richard of Cornwall, should be what may be called her second in command. Also, just before he left England he executed a will in which almost every word reveals his intense devotion to his wife. They had been married nearly twenty years, but he was her lover still.

After her last child, a princess named Katharine, was born, Eleanor set herself to governing the country in good earnest, and though she made many mistakes, she acted far more wisely than might have been expected. In addition to being Regent she proclaimed herself Lord Chief Justice and took her seat on the bench, presiding over important trials. Certainly she was no idler and faced her duties seriously.

Soon Henry was writing to ask for money, and at once she decided to demand it from the citizens of the capital, as if they had not suffered enough already. When Richard of Cornwall tried to show her she was unreasonable, she brought that witchery of hers into play, with the result he told her she must have her own way. Finding herself a despotic monarch with no one to control her, she ordered the citizens to give her an enormous sum in gold, and when they refused, she sentenced the Lord Mayor and two of the Sheriffs to be imprisoned in the Marshalsea. The action was so unprecedented, the Lord Mayor being practically king in his own square mile, that the people were too stupefied to know what to do. Before they could rise in revolt, as most certainly they would have done, another letter arrived from Henry, telling her he had arranged a marriage between Prince Edward who was with him in France

and the young Princess Eleanor of Castile, and coolly suggesting the Queen should obtain the necessary money from the Jews to pay for the wedding.

This she proceeded to do with the usual barbarity, while the London citizens, having released their Mayor and Sheriffs, were content to look on, thankful she was not trying to extort more from them. The money raised, Eleanor carried it herself over to her husband, delighted beyond words to be reunited to him and her son. She had not seen either for more than a year.

Back in London with the young bride and bridegroom, there was another family reunion, and Eleanor laid the little Princess Katharine in her father's arms. Apparently making the best of the situation, the citizens of London presented the King with a large sum in gold ; but as that was not enough, he haggled until they added an extremely valuable piece of plate. Even then he was not satisfied, but fined the city three thousand marks, which he pocketed, his excuse being that they had allowed a priest who had been accused of murder to escape from Newgate.

In addition to all else, he laid a further burden, and a queer one, on the citizens, commanding them to pay fourpence a day for the maintenance of his Polar bear which he kept in the Tower ; the creature had been provided already with a long chain, confined by which it was allowed to enter the river to catch its own fish. At that time the Thames teemed with fish of all kinds, but with salmon especially.

The King had inherited his grandfather's interest in animals, and seems to have transferred the collection from Woodstock to the Tower. There wild animals remained on show for six hundred years, and it was only at the beginning of the last century that the menagerie, in the care of the newly formed Zoological Society, was removed to Regent's Park. Our present very popular Zoo is a direct link with

the walled garden at Woodstock and the dens in the Tower.

Bad news came from Scotland. The Regents, Baliol and Comyn, had imprisoned young King Alexander and his girl wife; it was whispered their lives were in danger.

At the news that mother-love of Eleanor's rose in its strength. She urged the King to raise an army to march to the rescue of her young daughter, but while that was being done she acted on her own initiative. Her extravagances and follies were flung aside, she was a mother fighting for her child. Her physician was to be trusted, she knew, and she dispatched him secretly to Edinburgh with urgent orders to hasten back as soon as possible, to tell her the true state of affairs. The news he brought added to her fears. By some means he had obtained a secret interview with Queen Margaret. "She had been rudely torn from her husband and kept apart from him in a damp and doleful place, the bad air of which had seriously injured her health," he said. "The King and Queen were being treated with the utmost contumely and were in danger of their lives."

By then the army was ready to advance and Eleanor insisted on going with it. This time there were no sham greetings of loyalty, no scattering of flowers as she rode through the country. Worn with anxiety she pressed forward with the men, hoping, praying, they might not be too late. At Wark Castle, on the Scottish borders, her strength gave way. She was so seriously ill her distracted husband believed she was dying, and would have stayed with her, but she begged him to think of their daughter, to save her at all costs. Torn between his love for his wife and that for his child, Henry had to obey, and who shall say what torments of anxiety and despair the Queen endured till the cloud lifted.

Little Margaret and her husband were set at

liberty and allowed to join her father, and at once Henry hurried with them both to Wark. The Queen's arms opened, and closed to clasp her daughter again, while the girl clung to her mother in a transport of affection and joy.

Henry must have looked on with deep emotion which found expression in his determination that mother and child should be together for some time. He issued an order that : "The Queen of Scotland is to remain with the sick Queen, her mother, his beloved consort, at Wark Castle, until the said Queen be sufficiently recovered to travel southward."

Joy worked the miracle with Queen Eleanor who came back from the Valley of the Shadow with her daughter beside her, nursing her, loving her, comforting her, and when she was well enough to travel the girl went with her, accompanied by the young King of Scotland, who had appointed Henry his guardian for the rest of his minority. They went to Woodstock, and there in the luxurious palace set in its lovely gardens, a happy time was spent, a brief lull before the breaking storm.

Again money was short, and Eleanor maddened the much-tried citizens of London by demanding "Queen Gold," a tax for her benefit laid on the river-side docks and quays, and on all goods landed there. Also she had taken possession of the rents paid for London Bridge and the tolls collected there, to which she had some right, only, unfortunately, whoever had that money was expected to keep the bridge in repair and this she neglected to do. To make matters worse a dreadful famine, the result of a series of cold summers when the grain had rotted in the fields, swept over the land. And at this time, with the people muttering in discontent, and the cares of poverty pressing hard, the Queen had another heavy blow, for little Princess Katharine, her youngest child, sickened and died.

Life and death jostled close, for a child was coming to the young Queen of Scotland and the Court

removed to Windsor that it might be born there. All that motherly side of Queen Eleanor's character was foremost in those days. In her grief for the little one she had lost, in her care for her eldest daughter and her joy when she held her first grandchild, a little girl, in her arms.

The birth safely over, the King and Queen of Scotland returned north, and as Henry and his eldest son were back in France, Eleanor took up her residence in the Tower. Again she demanded money from the citizens, and what was worse from the point of view of many, she obtained it. No man could withstand her wiles, it was said. When the grave and harassed fathers of the City went to her determined to refuse to submit to further extortions, they came away, shame-faced and confused, to confess they had agreed to whatever she had proposed. Most certainly sorcery was at work, said the people. There was no man who could resist the witch, and still she was claiming Queen Gold, and still London Bridge showed signs of falling to ruin for lack of the money she withheld from it.

Public opinion against her ran to extraordinary heights and rumours spread to her discredit, most of them farcically untrue. There was, for instance, a ballad sung by wandering minstrels which told how the King, most faithful of husbands as he was known to be, had fallen in love with a beautiful lady named Rosamond who had been killed by Queen Eleanor "with the poison of toads" administered by a witch who was in her confidence. One version actually added that the poisoned Rosamond was buried at Godstow, where her grave could be seen. Of course the story was a garbled account of the tragedy of Fair Rosamond which had been enacted a hundred years or more, and of which the very sorry hero was King Henry's grandfather.

Knowledge of history, even of events so near their own time, was not common in the thirteenth century, however. Probably most people had heard of Fair

Rosamond without having any clear idea as to the time in which she lived, so were quite ready to accept the version which threw the guilt upon their own King and Queen.

"She is a witch and the friend of witches," was the general opinion as the discontent grew to hate, born from poverty and injustice, till it rose seething to the pitch of insurrection.

The people of London had a wave of madness against the Jews. Oppressed by taxation, they were desperate in their need of money to meet the high charges for food in which the famine had resulted, and having the idea that all Jews were rich and that to rob them was no crime, one deed of violence led to others till the city was aflame. A contemporary chronicler, Wikes, who was in London at the time, left a vivid story of the insane fury to which the mob gave way. "At the sound of Paul's great bell," he says, "a numerous mob sallied forth, led on by Stephen Buckrell, the marshal of London, and John Fitzjohn, a powerful baron. They killed and plundered many of these wretched Jews without mercy. The ferocious leader, John Fitzjohn, ran through with his sword in cold blood Kokben Abraham, the wealthiest Hebrew resident in London. Besides killing and plundering five hundred of the devoted race, the mob turned the rest out of their beds, undressed as they were, and kept them without shelter all through the night.

When morning came the mob found no more Jews to rob or slay, but their blood lust, once roused, would not be satisfied. They ran through the narrow streets with drawn swords or brandished clubs, screaming for other victims on whom to vent their greed and hate. At the worst moment possible, a moment when all sanity had been shed and stark madness raced uncontrolled, someone raised the extraordinarily stupid cry that the Queen was a patron of Jews, that she by her sorcery had enabled some poor remnant to escape. Considering

her own extortions, it is difficult to imagine how such a wild accusation could have been believed even by the most ignorant. But absurd as it was it served as a fresh slogan to spur on the crowd, jaded by blood-shed now, and hound them to a new victim.

"The Witch Queen . . . the woman who is hiding the Jews," went the screams, and the crowd in a turbulent mass rushed towards the Tower where Eleanor was. The garrison was small, she realised her danger, and in panic entered a barge, accompanied by a few of her ladies, as filled with fear as herself.

"Row . . . row upstream to Windsor," she bade the men at the oars, and one of them pointed to the bridge through whose narrow arches the tide was racing. It was going out fast, all the way it would be dead against them, but the recent heavy rains which had rotted the corn had made the water in full spate. To shoot the bridge was a dangerous adventure always, to attempt it now meant their lives would be in peril. The barge would be caught in the flood-water and dashed against the piles.

Eleanor saw the danger but would not be warned. Better to die in the angry waters than to be torn to pieces by the mob. Again she ordered the men to row on at any cost, and the gentlemen-at-arms who attended her repeated her command with threats to enforce them. Reluctantly the rowers bent to their oars, soldiers with drawn swords standing over them, in the stern the Queen with her few ladies clinging together in paroxysms of fear.

The Tower was left behind, the barge forged its way slowly up the swollen stream, well in mid-river, when some of those on the bank recognised the Royal craft, and the shout went up that the Queen was escaping. A rush was made to London Bridge where some of the buildings were in such bad repair they had either collapsed or been taken down for public safety and remained in ruin. The barge crept up, striving to make its way through one of the middle arches, but by that time a sea of rage-

distorted faces was looking down, and as the boat came nearer it was met by a rain of missiles. "Rotten eggs, sheep's bones, mud and everything vile," as Strickland says. The ladies begged they might go back, the uncleanliness was an added horror, but still the Queen urged the boatmen forward. Again they made superhuman efforts, the bridge was nearly gained in face of the roaring water, when the hail changed its character. The crowd were pulling down the dismantled buildings and hurling baulks of timber and stones on to the barge to sink her. The Cockney sense of humour was astir, men laughed as they tried to kill the helpless women, seeing grim justice in bringing about the Queen's death by the ruins of the houses she had neglected.

Whether Eleanor realised the impossibility of passing under the bridge in the face of such a barrage, or whether some of the officers insisted on retreat is doubtful. At least the barge was allowed to drift downstream, leaving the guarded bridge, and though many of the mob ran along the bank, screaming curses on the witch, gradually they were left behind. Covered by the horrible mud which had been flung, trembling, exhausted, half-fainting, the ladies reached the Tower, and as the tumult had died there was promise of shelter for the present at least. Eleanor, however, was too frightened to remain, and to her relief the Bishop of London, who remained loyal, shared her view. Muffled in a dark cloak so that none might recognise her, she escaped to his palace in St. Paul's churchyard, where she remained the night and in the morning made her way out of the City, presently reaching Windsor.

5

Shaken by the terrible adventure, Eleanor went to France to visit her sister Margaret, and while she was absent the barons came to open warfare against the King, the direct result of her narrow escape.

Both Henry and his son were furious at the insults heaped upon her, and shaken by the knowledge of her danger. They swore to make the citizens pay in suffering as well as in gold, and Henry promptly broke the agreement he had entered into in the document known as the Oxford Statute which has been described as the second Magna Charta. Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, was the prime mover in the sealing of that statute. "He was the man who gave England her freedom," as Green the historian says, but he had never forgiven Eleanor that insult to his wife, and was accused—probably without reason—of having stirred the Londoners against her. Now he, with other nobles, insisted on the King's extortions being stopped, on which Henry gathered an army to fight for what he called his rights.

The barons obtained reinforcements from London and the two armies met near Lewes. Victory seemed with the King when one of the barons' battalions broke and fled, and the cry went up that they were the Londoners, men who, not being trained soldiers, had been unable to withstand the brunt of battle.

"If they are Londoners they are the men who tried to drown my mother," exclaimed Prince Edward. "Every one of them shall die to avenge her suffering."

Dreadful was the flight of those unhappy men, dreadful the vengeance of those who rode them down. Outside Lewes that debacle had begun, but not until Croydon town was reached were the last remnants overtaken. Five hundred dead were piled in Croydon streets, and the gutters ran red with blood.

Flushed with triumphant satisfaction that his mother's enemies had paid dearly, Edward called his followers to ride back to join his father. Approaching Lewes, war weary on flagging horses, they met disaster. King Henry had been unable to continue the fight without the support of his son, and Prince Edward's hot-headed pursuit had changed victory

into defeat. The King was a prisoner, and Edward, seeing escape was impossible, surrendered.

Queen Eleanor was frantic with anxiety when the news reached her. According to one chronicler, Robert of Gloucester, she came to England in secret and, as he says, "was espy in the land," meaning she was concealed here. Others suggest she remained in France, but wherever she was, she worked heroically for her dear ones. The prisoners had been taken to Wallingford Castle, and presently a message reached Sir Warren de Basingbourne, a friend of Prince Edward, in Bristol where all the garrison were loyal. The message came from the Queen. She had discovered Wallingford was poorly manned and badly munitioned, therefore if Sir Warrene would lead a fair force against it, the prisoners might be released. That story, which is quite true, gives colour to the report of Eleanor being in England, perhaps in disguise and at Wallingford itself, using her woman's charm to learn the secrets of the castle.

Sir Warrene obeyed only to fail. The state of the garrison was as the Queen had said, but when the fall of the castle seemed certain, its defenders brought Prince Edward on to the battlements bound hand and foot. If they wanted him, a voice called, the attackers should have him sure enough, but it would be only as a dead and mangled body, shot at them from a mangonel, a machine for catapulting stones. The threat had its effect. Sir Warrene and his men withdrew so quickly it seems certain Eleanor was with them. That retreat, to save her son from peril, is so exactly what a mother would do.

De Montfort decided his prisoners had better be in more safe keeping, so removed them to Kenilworth where they were allowed a good deal of liberty, even riding in the neighbouring forest under a close guard. Here a woman took part in the plan of escape, Lady Maude Mortimer, a friend of the Queen's and, I think, the two ladies evolved the scheme between them. Somehow Lady Maude gained

admittance to the castle and, once within the walls, she was with Prince Edward long enough to whisper a few words. He understood and acted on them quickly.

The next day, when out for his usual ride, he challenged his guards to race, and as they were all better mounted than he, there seemed no point in refusing. Again and again the races were repeated, till all the horses were thoroughly exhausted. Then Edward rode to a thicket by the wayside and there a fresh horse of surprising fleetness was waiting. In an instant he was out of one saddle into the other and was away, pausing once to look back and shout to the men that they must commend him to the King, and assure His Majesty he would soon be out of prison.

He gave the horse its head and rode to freedom before the guards could make any effort at recapture.

Back in France, Eleanor managed to raise money on her oft-pawned jewels, to gather men and equip ships, but before she could reach England Edward had fought the battle of Evesham, the King was freed and the barons scattered. On the field Simon de Montfort and his eldest son were lying dead.

In connection with their fate a pretty romance was told by minstrels and balladmongers, keeping its popularity in songs and chapbooks well into the last century. Nor is the old story quite forgotten even now. In the Mile End Road, that great thoroughfare which leads due east from London, at the place where a turnpike used to stand, is a public-house with the sign "The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green." Though the house is quite modern, other inns, all with the same sign, have stood on the same site for many centuries, and are believed to be the successors of the thatched cottage which was the blind beggar's home.

According to those old songs, the Blind Beggar had one daughter who was so graceful and refined as well as beautiful, that far and wide she was known

as "the prettee Bessee," but as her parents were so poor she left home to work as a servant at "The Queen's Armes in Rumford." I believe there is a Queen's Arms in Romford still, which traditionally is another link with the story. While there, four lovers made her offers of marriage, a gentleman of good degree, a merchant of London, and her master's son, but each on hearing her father was the Blind Beggar who sat on the wayside in Bethnal Green, decided her birth was too lowly for any of them to make her his wife. The fourth lover was a "gallant young knight" and, as might be expected from such a hero, he told Bessee that whatever her father might be, he loved her, and forthwith swung her on to his saddle bow to ride from Romford to Bethnal Green that he might ask the consent of the Blind Beggar.

This was given, and at the marriage feast, attended by the relations and friends of the young knight, many comments were passed on the dignity and polish of the beggar's manners, all of which was in keeping with the refinement of his daughter. He was asked to tell who and what he was in reality, and, for the sake of Bessee, broke the silence of years and confessed his identity.

He was Henry de Montfort, son of the Earl of Leicester, that son who was believed to have lain dead at Evesham by his father's side.

According to his story, which though it was repeated in ballad and romance, is believed to have been authentic history by many authorities, he had fallen sorely wounded, and lay through the awful night, blinded and near to death. In the darkest hours "a baron's fair daughter" came to the stricken field, seeking her father who was amongst the fallen, and finding young de Montfort lived, bade her servants carry him to a safe hiding-place where she nursed him back to life. Of course, such a romance could but come to one ending. Henry de Montfort and the fair lady who had saved his life, fell in love and married, but because he had lost his

fortune and dared not declare his identity, they sought refuge in "the remote village of Bethnal Green," and so lived in obscurity and happiness through the years. The ballad ends on a cheerful note :

*Thus was the feaste ended with joy and delight,
A bridegroom most happy was then the young knight.
In joy and felicitee long lived hee,
With the Blind Beggar's daughter, his prettee Bessee.*

Evesham, which set Henry more securely on his throne, was fought in 1265, and the next few years saw many important functions in which Queen Eleanor took part. 1266 was Henry's jubilee, when he celebrated the fiftieth year of his reign, and though we hear so much in contemporary records of his selfish extravagance and that of his queen, we find that on this occasion huge sums were dispersed in charity, and "one hundred and fifty one pounds, and eighteen shillings, was distributed daily by the wayside."

Three years later was another great function, which has a greater interest for us as so much of its direct results remain. For fifty years, ever since his boyhood, King Henry had devoted himself to the pious work of rebuilding Westminster Abbey which had fallen into ruin, and though the foundations are Saxon, dating from the Confessor, by far the greatest part of the remaining walls are those Henry built. On October 13th, St. Edward's Day, 1269, the Confessor's tomb was opened in the presence of the King and Queen and the dignitaries of the Church. Within the coffin were the bones of the long-dead King, wrapped in his mouldering robes of state. Reverently these were lifted from the place where they had lain for two hundred years, and placed in a new coffin which was borne on the shoulders of the King and Prince in solemn procession to the "chapel of

Kings," where the new shrine had been prepared. The old coffin, King Henry ordered should be put aside and carefully preserved, that when he should die, he might be laid in it. The shrine which Henry built to contain the relics of the Confessor, remains intact, but of the long Latin inscription written by the King himself, only a few letters exist.

Three years after the dedication of the shrine, that old coffin was brought into use again. King Henry died at Bury St. Edmunds, but was brought to the Abbey he had built for burial and where his tomb remains close to the shrine of the Confessor. It is surmounted by a particularly fine bronze statue that undoubtedly is a good portrait of the King as he was in life. The statue was modelled and cast under the direction of Queen Eleanor, and she was too great an artist to be satisfied with the second best.

By his will she was appointed sole and despotic Regent of England, and as Prince Edward was out of the country she took full control in her son's name, proclaiming him Edward I, King of England, at a great council she called at the Temple.

That year of her widowhood brought other griefs to the Queen, who for all her folly had been a faithful and loving wife and a devoted mother. Directly news of her father's death reached Scotland, Queen Margaret hastened to her mother that she might try to comfort her, and that brief entry in the chronicles tells much to those who read aright of the love which lived between this mother and daughter.

The two were reunited a tragically short time. While on that visit to England, young Queen Margaret—she was not quite thirty-two—sickened of some illness whose nature we do not know, and died in her mother's arms.

Directly Edward returned to England preparations for his coronation were set afoot, and amongst the many French nobles who came to England for the ceremony was the Duke de Bretagne who was accompanied by his wife, Princess Beatrice of

England, Queen Eleanor's youngest remaining daughter. Again there was a brief reunion. Beatrice had never been in robust health, suffering from some form of recurrent fever, and probably her delicacy made her doubly dear to that mother heart. Their parting had been long, though Eleanor had paid many visits to the Court of the Duke, and had had the happiness of knowing the marriage had been particularly successful. Now mother and daughter were together in Westminster Palace, they shared the splendours of the coronation which made Edward and his Eleanor King and Queen, and if anything could have lessened the pain of her eldest daughter's death, it must have been the sweet sympathy and affection of the other girl.

Swiftly, without warning, the blow descended. Beatrice, Duchess de Bretagne, died a few days after the coronation, probably from a heart weakness, though there is a suggestion of accident. No details are known, only that death occurred very suddenly, and from that blow the Queen Mother never recovered fully.

Of her nine children four sons and one girl, little Princess Katharine, had died before their father, and this double blow, robbing her of her two surviving daughters, left the Queen Mother with two sons out of all her family. She spoke of retiring to a convent, but apparently the King dissuaded her for a time. She has been called frivolous, but Edward seems to have consulted her on the most important points he had to face in the earlier part of his reign. And unpopular though she had been as Queen Consort, we find no fault brought against her during her years as Queen Mother.

She outlived her husband for nineteen years, and eleven years after his death entered the convent on which her thoughts had been fixed for so long, choosing that at Ambresbury where the bardic songs she loved, said King Arthur's queen had died. Even then, however, she kept in close touch with the King,

who visited her often and continued to consult her right to the end.

Two very human stories have come to us of those eight years of her retirement, stories which show her in a different light from that of the glittering splendour in which her earlier days were passed. It seems that hearing of her charity and of her love for her dead husband, a man presented himself at Ambresbury begging he might be allowed to see her. His prayer was granted, on which he said he only wanted to express his gratitude. For years he had been blind, but on praying at the tomb of King Henry in Westminster Abbey, his sight had been restored, surely proof that the late King was a saint at whose shrine miracles were worked.

The Queen Mother was shrewd and sensible in many ways, qualities which had developed in her later years, but she was quite unable to withstand the praise of her dead husband and believed all she was told. She loaded the man with gifts, but apparently he returned for more and more, and so happened to be at the convent during one of King Edward's frequent visits. To him the Queen Mother told her story, and had the man brought into the King's presence that he might have other details at first hand.

King Edward listened, he looked at the man and came to an opinion that was the reverse of complimentary. The man was sent away, to the Queen Mother's disappointment.

"Don't you believe his sight was restored as he prayed at your father's grave?" she asked, troubled.

"I don't," retorted Edward. "Having seen the fellow I feel sure that either king or saint, who had any common sense, would rather have robbed such a man of his speech than have restored his sight, if he had had power to either. So at least he would have prevented his hypocritical imposture."

What became of the man after that we do not know; probably he made himself scarce, and certainly

the Queen Mother did not allow herself to be imposed upon further. As her son had a high opinion of her judgment so she had implicit trust in his.

The other story concerns a very charming letter she wrote to him on behalf of a lady who had appealed to her for help. The lady's child was under the guardianship of the King and, apparently, she had been forbidden access to it.

“Sweetest son,” the Queen Mother wrote. “We know well how great is the desire that a mother has to see her child when she has been long away from him, and that Dame Margaret Neville has not seen for a long time past her son who is in the keeping of Dame Margaret de Weyland. We pray you, sweet son, that you will command the said Margaret de Weyland that she shall suffer the mother to have the solace of her child after her desire.”

There wrote the loving mother, a woman far removed from the rapacious creature described by her enemies in her youth.

Her last illness had seized her, she was extremely weak and few had any hope of her rallying. In spite of pressure of public affairs, he was in the full tide of his wars with Scotland, Edward hastened to Ambresbury and watched by her side with unfailing devotion. Ill though she was, he still appealed to her for advice, telling her of a problem that was heavy on his mind just then.

A Frenchman named Turbeville, had flung himself on the King's mercy, declaring he was in danger in his own country, and Edward, not so shrewd as he had been in the case of the impostor, had believed what he had been told. Turbeville was received at Court and given some place of trust, but now had come stories of State secrets being revealed with the result that it had been proved beyond doubt the man was a spy. His whole story was an invention to gain the confidence of the English King, and he had repaid kindness with the basest ingratitude.

Quite justly he had been sentenced to death, “but

he had a dread to die," says Piers, a contemporary, so now had written to the King begging his life might be spared and offering in exchange to betray many officials of the Royal Household who, he said, were as deep in the treachery as he had been. Edward was greatly disturbed, he trusted his servants completely ; that there should be traitors amongst them was a shock, and he did not know how far he might believe what the proved spy offered to reveal.

The old Queen Mother gave the good advice on which he acted.

" The man is a traitor by his own confession," she said. " Therefore his word cannot be trusted. Let him die the death to which he has been condemned justly and pay no heed to whatever accusations he may utter."

To his grief it was impossible for Edward to stay with his mother to the end, though perhaps she rallied somewhat just before he went. A little later she died, and the nuns, knowing the King would wish her to have a splendid burial, embalmed the body until he returned from Scotland when he laid her to rest in Ambresbury under a magnificent tomb. Her heart he carried to London to lay it in the newly built church of the " Minoresses " (*Sorores Minores*) commonly called The Minories. This had been founded recently by the wife of the Queen's second son, and we may be sure that she in her convent at Ambresbury had taken great interest in the pious work. Probably she had expressed a wish to visit the church when it was completed ; and thus by taking her heart there to lie in a specially built shrine, King Edward was carrying out a sacred duty.

MARGARET OF FRANCE THE QUEEN WHO WAS NEVER CROWNED

PHILIP LE BEL, King of France, sat on his chair of state, his hand resting lightly on the vellum scroll before him, a scroll whose heading showed it was a marriage contract between the King of England and a Princess of France . . . his cunning eyes half closed as he watched Edmund of Lancaster, who entered in state as representing his brother the King, with him a great train of nobles.

"A happy meeting this, my lord," King Philip spoke smoothly, but with a sneer the Duke found difficult to understand; but he was a slow-thinking man, easily duped. "This vellum signed, the ancient country of Gascony returns to the France whose land it is by every right, and your King receives a lovely bride."

"So I have told my brother," Edmund said. "And he is pleased all has been arranged so well. He still mourns his wife, the Queen Eleanor, now three years dead, for he loved her as few men have ever loved; but his counsellors have advised him to marry again, and where could he find a consort so suitable as Your Majesty's sister, known the world over as Blanche the Beautiful? Her portrait and a full description of her charms I have had conveyed to my brother. Already he counts himself a fortunate man to have won a princess so fair."

The brows of Philip le Bel drew together above his handsome eyes. "It is good to hear the King of England is so pleased at his alliance," he said smoothly. "But you, my Lord of Lancaster, have made a mistake in my sister's name. Not Blanche, who is to marry the Duke of Austria, but Margaret is named on this scroll."

The words were a bombshell. Edmund of Lancaster was at the table, banging his clenched hand upon the scroll, protesting violently against the atrocious statement as well he might. For two years or more the bargaining had continued, and during all that time he had made it his business to see that his brother, the King of England, was kept reminded of the extraordinary beauty of the French Princess in return for whom he was to give up Gascony. Edward, honestly and truly grieving for his Eleanor, had thought little of his bride-to-be at first, but gradually all the poetry written about her, all the songs sung in her praise, had influenced his artistic soul, and soldier though he was, he was artist as well, more swayed by music than most men. Now at the end of these years he professed himself ardently in love with the lady and had urged his brother to get the documents signed without delay. What did the loss of territory, even a land so rich and fair as Gascony, matter if he won Blanche the Beautiful as his bride.

Everything seemed settled, Edmund of Lancaster had entered this gilded chamber, sure he had brought all negotiations to a most satisfactory conclusion, only to be met by this astounding statement. Perhaps the greatest marvel was that Philip had spoken before the signing. It is unlikely Lancaster could read with any fluency, and the scribe whose duty it was to make the contents of the document known might have slurred over the name of the bride. Perhaps Philip thought that would be carrying duplicity too far, and therefore made his statement before the affixing of the seals.

" Margaret . . . your sister Margaret," Lancaster spoke the name with contempt. " She is a child and what is more she has no beauty. Do you think the King my brother will choose her for his queen ? "

" The choice has been made already." Philip waved his hand. " I regret the mistake, my lord, but you must see it is you who are to blame, not I. I do not dispute that at first the name of my elder sister was mentioned, but that was only for a little while. Soon it was agreed that my younger sister is the most fitting wife for your brother."

" You are wrong," Lancaster retorted wrathfully. " Again I say she is no more than a child, while my brother has passed his sixtieth birthday. Apart from that, it is Blanche the Beautiful he wishes to marry. Not Margaret, the childish and the plain."

" Again I can only express my regret at the mistake," King Philip said. " But, my lord, I would point out it is too late to alter it now. My sister Blanche is shortly to marry the Duke of Austria. . . ."

" There is time to prevent that marriage," Edmund of Lancaster retorted. " And I will have no other lady to take to England to my brother."

" That is unfortunate indeed." Philip rose to his feet. He was going to play his trump card. " The Pope has been approached already, and has issued his dispensation for the marriage of Margaret to your brother. That dispensation renders the betrothal doubly sacred. It is almost as binding as if she were a wife."

That was true. With infinite cunning the French King had worked in secret to obtain the Pope's unconscious aid in bringing about the betrayal. Not since the days when Jacob was cheated of his Rachel, and her sister palmed off on him instead, had a more cruel trick been planned, a trick that was played with a woman's happiness at stake.

Edmund strode to the door, his retinue following him. On the threshold he turned to fling his defiance at the French King.

" You have flouted my brother, but you will pay," he vowed. " Edward will have no Margaret the child . . . if he cannot have the woman he loves, he will take back the Gascony of which you have cheated him."

It was the fashion in the Middle Ages for historians to describe all Royal ladies as lovely, and for bards to sing of their beauty, but no such rhapsodies were ever associated with the name of that little Princess Margaret of France who was being used as a pawn in brother's unscrupulous game. That he was the handsomest man of his time, we are told again and again, also that no princess, however fair, had equalled his sister, Blanche the Beautiful, in charm. But of Margaret we hear only that she was very good, and under the circumstances that might be described as a back-handed compliment. She was utterly eclipsed by the brilliance of her brother and sister.

In her secluded home, where she had been kept in the background, but carefully educated and trained by her mother, rumours of what was happening in the outer world must have reached her. She attended the brilliant marriage ceremony which gave her sister to the Duke of Austria, and before that gaiety had ended, her country was in arms, prepared to fight Edward of England, who was marching at the head of a great army to avenge the trick which had been played upon him, though as he was in the midst of his wars with Scotland, he had few men and little money to spare on this fresh campaign. Knowing this his brother, Lancaster, had written begging him to hide his mortification and accept the treacherous offer of the French King. " Do not let a small matter plunge the country into fresh war," he wrote.

A small matter, indeed, when it was the substitution of one bride for another.

Edward did not heed, and for four terrible years the fight went on, while Margaret, passing from childhood to womanhood, knew the battles were being waged, and men were dying, because the English King would not have her as his wife. Public affairs were not discussed with girls, but so much she must have heard, and surely she came to view Edward with shrinking terror as a fierce and implacable foe who laid her brother's country in desolation and could not be driven back.

Edward clung to his hope of reducing Philip to the dust with bulldog tenacity, and yet at the end of those four years of blood and rapine, the English were beaten . . . not in the field, but by economic conditions at home, where money was scarce and famine stalked, and by the need of gathering more men on the Scottish frontier, if the conquests made there already were to be maintained. Philip was tired of the war also. By mutual arrangement it was stopped, and the Pope appealed to as arbitrator. His verdict was remarkably just. Since by every right Gascony belonged to the King of France, let him keep it, but the English King must marry Margaret, the girl princess, and receive with her the very handsome dowry she had inherited from her father.

That dowry settled the question so far as Edward was concerned. His need of money was desperate, and though he had persecuted the Jews to the last limit as his parents had done before him and had extorted from them all they could pay, he knew he might have to face rebellion at home unless he could replenish his coffers. This Margaret's dowry would do. His brother Edmund had died during the war, so other great nobles were dispatched to France to bring home the bride, while her elderly bridegroom devoted himself to preparing for a fresh invasion of Scotland where a new leader named William Wallace had arisen.

King Philip had agreed to the terms laid down by



From her statuette on the tomb of her Great Nephew, John of Eltham, in Westminster Abbey.

the Pope, but he did so with an ill grace . . . he had meant to retain his young sister's dowry for his own use. However, he handed it over with the best grace he could, and ordered the Princess to prepare for the journey to England to marry the King of whom she could think only with dread.

Two ladies of the English nobility arrived to escort her, Lady Vaux and Lady Joanna Fountayne, each of whom was rewarded with the sum of ten pounds for taking the journey, and by that time, so that the alliance between England and France might be made closer still, it was arranged that on the wedding day of the Princess, the bond of betrothal between her niece Isabella, the French King's little daughter, then six years old, and King Edward's boy son should be sealed. Considering the manner in which Philip le Bel had behaved over the marriage, it is difficult to imagine Edward would wish to see the French King's daughter married to his own son, but marriages were matters of convenience in the days of Chivalry, and the cementing of the alliance between England and France was of far more importance than the domestic happiness of any young couple.

Poor little Princess Margaret undertook that journey to her warlike husband with fear and trembling, but no one thought of consulting her, so to England she had to come. Her exact age is uncertain, according to one account she was only eleven when her brother substituted her name for her sister's in the marriage contract ; yet another chronicler says she was twenty when she came to England in 1299, which was six years later. By any computation, however, she was in her girlhood while Edward was well over sixty, and the father of thirteen children, though to be sure, most of them had died. Yet as they met in Canterbury Castle, the miracle happened, and the plain little princess, the ugly duckling of the handsome family, fell straightway in love with the bridegroom chosen for her.

Her romance was not so impossible as seems at

first sight. Edward wore his years lightly, right to the end of his life "he was seldom ill and neither lost his teeth nor was his sight dimmed by age." Athletic always, "he was so strong and active he could leap into the saddle by merely putting his hand upon it." Six feet two inches, he stood, perfectly proportioned as the measurements taken of his skeleton showed when his tomb was opened. He had inherited his love for music and the fine arts from his mother, and had much of that charm which had resulted in her being stoned as a witch. Brutal in war as he was, in times of peace he could not but win friends, and a contemporary historian whose description has just been quoted (John o' London, the secretary appointed to attend on the girl queen), tells us that his eyes were "gentle and dovelike when he was pleased, but fierce as a lion's and sparkling with fire when he was angry." Though John o' London wrote that description there is little doubt it was dictated by the Queen, a tender tribute to the man who had won her girlish heart, written just after his death.

Evidently those eloquent eyes were "gentle and dovelike" as they rested on the shy and nervous girl who had come to him full of fears. Pleasantly he spoke to her, gently he roused her interest in her new home, and willingly she responded to his kindness. In her own land she had been slighted, here she was to be a Queen, and this kindly, handsome gentleman was the King whose throne she would share.

Disparity of age was forgotten. Later, when she saw the cruel side of her husband's nature revealed, she had no blame for him. From first to last he was her ideal knight, and with all his many faults Edward never disappointed her. As a husband he was without blame. His devotion to his "good Queen Eleanor" had been passionate, unwavering, intense; now he had tender pity and loyal affection for the girl who had been given into his keeping.

They were married at Canterbury Cathedral and

had a month's honeymoon, spent at Eltham, it is believed, though one account says Guildford. Westminster Palace had been gutted by fire so there was no question of their going there. The wedding was on September 9th, and October 12th, they came to London to take up their residence in the Tower. Bankrupt though the country was, the citizens of London made great efforts to give the new Queen a worthy welcome. In the course of her progress through the City she passed down Cheapside, and there two conduits jetted wine instead of water, "while cloths of gold hung from all windows."

In less than a week Edward had to leave his young wife. The Scots had rallied under Wallace and the English King was in danger of losing all he had won by conquest. Within the few days which had elapsed since their marriage, however, his young wife had established a hold about his heart which never lessened. She may have had no physical beauty—though her statue in the Abbey on the tomb of her great-nephew, John of Eltham, does not suggest plainness—but beyond doubt she had gentleness and sweetness, the graces most likely to appeal to Edward. "She was good without lack," the historian Piers, who knew her in her girlhood, wrote, and her husband agreed.

Before he left her the King drew out a set of special rules for the Governor of the Tower and the City Fathers, enjoining them to take all care of her and particularly "that no petitioner from the City should presume to approach the spot where she was, lest the Queen be endangered by the contagion brought from the infected air of the city."

The result of that order was to place the Tower in what we should call quarantine. Smallpox had made its first appearance in England, brought by the soldiers recently returned from the Crusade, and was raging with ghastly fierceness throughout London.

So, shut away in the State apartments of the Tower,

Queen Margaret spent her days with her ladies, her thoughts seldom straying far from the soldier-husband who was fighting across the Border.

Margaret of France was never crowned, the first Queen Consort of whom that can be said. The absence of her husband in Scotland and the ruined state of Westminster Palace were the excuses made for the omission, but the real reason was the lack of money. Even her dowry had not made any appreciable difference to the impoverished state of the country. Taxes were high, unemployment, to use a familiar term, was rife, harvest had failed, smallpox was devastating the cities. Most certainly it was no time for public rejoicing as Queen Margaret would have been the first to agree.

In the spring after her marriage, Edward sent for her to join him in Scotland. As his first wife had accompanied him on his campaigns, he seems to have taken it for granted Margaret would do the same, and she obeyed without dreaming of protest. She would. But Eleanor, for all her wisely virtues, had been a stronger character than Margaret and could look unmoved at horror from which the other shrank.

In May she was back in England with her husband and his eldest son, and during their journey stayed at Castleton. Surrounding the town were large deer forests and Edward was an inveterate sportsman. "He was engaged with his dogs and falcons when not at war," wrote one of his staff. So a-hunting he would go on that summer day, and Queen Margaret rode with him, her falcon on her wrist. They were far from the place where they were staying, when she was taken ill and they carried her to a lonely house, set in the midst of twenty acres of ground, surrounded by a high wall. There in her agony she prayed to St. Thomas of Canterbury, and there on the first of June a little son was born to her. She named him

Thomas, in memory of her answered prayers, and later he became the first Earl of Norfolk and Marshal of England.

For at least five hundred years, well into the nineteenth century, that twenty acres of land remained enclosed in its stone wall, since by order of Edward whoever lived in the house was compelled to keep the wall in good condition in memory of the shelter given his well-loved wife. Possibly even now some traces of it can be found; the house itself, long since swept away, was close to Brotherton Church.

A year later she made her first acquaintance of lovely Woodstock where her second son, Edmund, afterwards Earl of Kent, was born, and then she went north again to Cawood Castle, near York, where she seems to have remained for three years, the King managing to visit her often even though he was engaged in the fighting over the Border. At that time, in consequence of the wars with Scotland, York was the capital of the Kingdom to all intents and purposes. There the Queen kept her Court, and there the Courts of the Exchequer and the King's Bench were held.

In 1304 came a message from Edward that she was to join him at Dunfermline. He boasted that Scotland was subdued as completely as Wales had been, he was master of Britain from sea to sea. To quote Strickland, "Scotland seemed to lie bleeding at his feet. Every fortress had surrendered excepting Stirling Castle, from whose unconquered height the Royal Lion of Scotland still floated in the national banner."

The journey of Margaret and her children to the north was one of constant peril in spite of the large armed guard who accompanied her. The country swarmed with unnamed heroes who fought in guerrilla bands against the invaders, and were ready to rob or murder any travellers who had come, or had seemed to come, from the south.

Christmas was spent at Dunfermline ; then came news that Stirling had fallen by treachery and that Wallace, the hero, was a prisoner. Vengeance, most ruthless and cruel, Edward had poured upon the hapless country already, but what had gone before was pale in its horror compared with his final acts. When he set out with his Queen to return to London, he had Wallace a prisoner in his train. Manacled with heavy gyves that ate into the flesh and made every movement torture, the patriot lay in a rough cart which jolted him in the wake of his captor. Of that pilgrimage of pain we know little, but can picture much, and one tradition, lingering at Carlisle, is eloquent of much more. The story goes that the King's company was so great there was no room for the prisoner in Carlisle Castle ; therefore he lay in his cart and his chains, all through the night in the bitter cold of the arch of the castle gate.

Westminster Palace had been rebuilt after the fire, so Queen Margaret went there, and prepared, as did all the Court, for the great banquet to be held to celebrate the "conquest" of Scotland, and a tournament on the "smooth field" (our Smithfield) to the same end. Whether the Queen was present at the brutal execution of Wallace we do not know, but certainly she presided as Queen of Beauty at the tournament, held on the ground where his gallows had stood.

The two sides of Edward's character were much in evidence at this time, his brutality to his foes, his ruthless greed that led him to untellable cruelties against the Jews in his efforts to extort money, and his pleasure in his simple home life with his wife and children. He was particularly temperate in eating and drinking, and by some of the nobles was blamed because he wore his crown so seldom, and was seen in "the plain garments of a citizen excepting on days of festival."

Once a bishop remonstrated with him because his dress was so unlike what it was expected a king

would wear when old men remembered the fopperies of Henry III, and traditions lingered of the splendours in which John had indulged.

“ What more could I do in Royal robes than in this plain gaberdine, father ? ” was the King’s retort, on which we may suppose the bishop was silenced.

During this time Margaret’s influence as Queen Mother made itself felt strongly. Her stepson, young Edward, was with her a great deal, and if her gentle guidance was not what was needed to bring out the good that seems to have lain latent in his character, at least her influence led him towards whatever of higher thought his life had known. She was intensely interested in his future, she talked to him a great deal of her little niece, Isabella, daughter of treacherous Philip le Bel to whom the Prince was betrothed, and though she could not have seen the child since she was four years old, she remembered much of her beauty and charm and spoke of them to the boy.

Another of Edward’s children for whom she felt great affection was Princess Mary who had entered the nunnery at Ambresbury, being “ veiled ” as a nun when ten years old. Evidently she did not belong to a close order, for she was allowed to visit her stepmother frequently—for instance she was with her at Woodstock when Prince Edmund was born—and once the Queen went a pilgrimage of thanksgiving with the Princess.

Thus sweetly, gently, loyally, the little Princess who had been called plain, grew into a gracious, kindly Queen, whose influence over her own two children, and over those of Edward’s previous marriage was all to the good.

During this time Prince Edward was stricken by that plague of smallpox which having once been introduced continued to sweep the country, and the earliest medical work by an English doctor was written at this time by Gaddesdon, Court physician to Queen Margaret, which suggests she was active

in nursing her stepson. Gaddesdon believed in "the colour cure," for he tells us, "I ordered the Prince to be enveloped in scarlet cloth and that his bed and all the furniture of his chamber should be of a bright red colour. Which practice not only cured him but prevented his being marked." Later medical men had very cutting things to say of Gaddesdon and his treatment, and Strickland says in comment: "In this childish state was the noble art of healing at the Court of Queen Margaret." Yet quite recently scientists of advanced thought have followed the same line of treatment and are by no means convinced that it is without value.

Throughout the eight years of her married life there is abundant proof of the affection the Queen had won from her husband and the care he took of her. She was never crowned, but he ordered a magnificent crown to be made for her by Thomas de Frowick, goldsmith of London, which she wore on State occasions. Unfortunately the King forgot to pay for it; apparently the affair really escaped his memory, for a few years later he sent Frowick an order "for a circlet of gold that Queen Margaret might wear at the feast of St. John the Baptist." The order spurred the goldsmith to make an urgent application for payment for the previous crown. His bill altogether, including "certain cups and vases which he had likewise made," amounted to a large sum, and he prayed Edward "For God's sake and for the soul of his father King Henry," to order his clerks to pay four hundred and forty pounds on account. We hope the bill was settled.

In 1305 came news that the beautiful Blanche, now Queen of Bohemia, and sister to Margaret, had died in Prague, and Edward, bearing no ill will for the manner in which he had been jilted, but more than content with the wife who had been given him

by a trick, commanded the Archbishop of Canterbury to pray for her soul because "she was the dear sister of his beloved consort."

Two instances of Margaret's gentle influence over her husband have come down to us, but it is impossible to doubt they were typical of many more.

During that time they kept Court in Dunfermline a wretched prisoner named "Godery the Goldsmith of Coigners" was dragged in chains before the King, charged with having committed the crime of making a crown for the use of Robert the Bruce. In consequence of the fall of Stirling and the capture of Wallace, the coronation for which the crown had been intended had not taken place, but the goldsmith had hidden the crown away naturally hoping the day would come when it might be used.

Edward was furious. He was ready to condemn the prisoner to torture and death, when for some reason Queen Margaret pleaded for him—perhaps she had been approached by some woman who loved the unhappy man. Her prayer was answered and Godery de Coigners went free. "We pardon him solely at the intercession of our dearest consort," King Edward set on record.

The other occasion was when a State prisoner, Bernard Pereres, escaped from Winchester Castle. Treachery had been at work, he could not have got away without friends, but there was no trace as to whom those friends might be. In his wrath Edward determined the entire city should suffer. He declared its citizens were serfs and fined the mayor an enormous sum, bringing him to the Marshalsea and shutting him up till the fine should be paid.

In desperation the citizens appealed to the Queen. She had happy memories of the city, since she had visited it in the early days of her marriage and there, some years later, her third child had been born, a princess named Eleanor after Edward's first wife. The baby had died within a few days, but Queen Margaret kept tender memories of her little life.

In his wish to show her honour and to provide for her privy purse, Edward had granted her a charter which entitled her to all fines levied in Winchester, long before he thought of fining the Mayor so heavily. Taking the parchment in her hand, she went to her husband and claimed her right to deal with the men of Winchester as she would. The King understood, and after a moment's hesitation told her she might have her way. Never was a woman's conquest over her husband more complete.

She set the Mayor at liberty, remitting half the fine and giving him time to pay the rest ; then returning to her husband begged so eloquently the rights of the citizens might be restored, that again he told her she should have her will.

In the summer of 1306 Edward found he was needed in Scotland again. That "rebellion," as he called it, had not been quenched by any means, and the martyrdom of Wallace had stirred the patriots to greater efforts. Again he put himself at the head of an army, young Prince Edward riding by his side, and so they came to Lannercost Priory, of which the chronicle is in existence. Thanks to it we know Edward was "very sick and infirm" when he reached the Priory, but after a stay of four days went on to Carlisle, eight miles away. Three days later he returned with his Queen and eldest son, and at Lannercost remained for two months. Though the shadow of death hung heavily upon them, those wintry weeks spent in the house of the Black Canons must have been an interlude of peace and even of happiness to Margaret. She drew so very near the man she loved and he, no longer the generous, protecting husband, clung to her in his weakness as a child.

In the early spring he rallied to go forth with his men once more. Again he showed himself a great general and ruthless leader, but in early July he reached Burgh-on-the-Sands and collapsed. Urgently messengers rode to seek young Edward, the Prince

of Wales, who was leading another part of the invading army, and Edward arrived in time. The dying King ordered him to continue the war with Scotland and to fulfil the marriage contract which bound him to Isabella of France, that another war might be prevented, and solemnly the Prince gave his promise to the dying man. So far Edward had spoken with fire, with the strength of determination if not of physical force, but when the promises had been given him a softer mood came. He spoke of his younger children, bidding his son "be kind to his little brothers Thomas and Edmund, and, above all, to treat with respect and tenderness his mother, Queen Margaret."

We have record of no other words spoken by the great King on his death-bed—his last thought was for the woman, still so young, who knelt in her bitter grief beside him.

Etiquette was strong in the fourteenth century, especially where Royal widows were concerned, but Margaret, so law-abiding as a rule, decided to flout convention by attending the wedding of her stepson almost as soon as her husband had been laid to his rest in Westminster.

She knew how ardently the dead King had wished for the wedding, seeing in it a hope for lasting peace between England and France. Towards the end his weary spirit had sickened of war's horrors, he craved for peace even while he urged young Edward to carry on the campaign against the Scots. The new King was in no hurry to marry, he was not interested in the schoolgirl to whom he was betrothed, preferring to go his reckless way with the friends of his choice—a way that would be more reckless than ever now the firm and guiding hand of his father had been removed.

Margaret had great influence over him, but he needed a stronger will than hers to turn him from his

folly. He had been hardly in his teens when she had become his stepmother, and he had come to love her dearly as certainly she loved him. She had been one of the great gathering which had seen him proclaimed the first Prince of Wales in Westminster Hall, she had been by his side when his father's life flickered out, and England's crown came to him as his inheritance. Now, Queen Mother in the full meaning of the words, she tried to lead him in the way his father would have wished, and brought him to consent to an almost immediate marriage with the girl to whom he had been betrothed eight years before.

Discarding her mourning she travelled with him to France, going in a ship Edward I had built as a Royal yacht and had named *The Margaret of Westminster* in her honour. Bravely, for the sake of her stepson, she forced herself to smile, yet even then she was composing the elegy on her dead husband which ended : " *At the foot of Edward's monument with my little sons I weep and call upon him. When Edward died all men died for me.*"

After witnessing the marriage of her stepson she returned with him and his bride to England, and almost from the first took the young Queen Isabella under her care. For eleven years Margaret outlived her husband, and throughout the time did nothing but good. Isabella, wayward, passionate, with seeds of cruelty in her heart, lived cleanly and well under the gentle influence of Margaret.

When their child, afterwards Edward III, was born, Margaret was present amongst the witnesses of the birth, and with tears of pride took the grandson of her dead husband in her arms.

Beyond the record of her being at the birth we know very little of her during her widowhood. She spent most of her time at Marlborough Castle, which was her own property, and devoted herself to the care and education of her two young sons. There she died, on February 14th, 1317, when she is believed to have been thirty-six years of age.

They brought her body to London to lay it in the church of the Grey Friars to which she had been a liberal benefactress, and her stepson raised a magnificent monument over her grave.

For two hundred years that remained, till, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the then Lord Mayor, Sir Martin Bowes, deliberately destroyed the entire tomb, selling the monument together with those of nine other Royal personages, who had been buried in the church, and a number of gravestones of more humble folk, for the sum of fifty pounds, which he put into his own pocket.

ISABELLA OF FRANCE

THE LADY BOUNTIFUL WHO BECAME THE SHE-WOLF

NEVER had any bride come to England with so splendid a trousseau as that which Isabella of France brought on the ship *Margaret of Westminster* after her marriage to Edward II at Boulogne cathedral. But never before had any English sovereign married a lady of such Royal birth. Others of our Queens Consort had been high born, with Royal blood in their veins, but Isabella was doubly royal, her father was Philip le Bel, reigning King of France, her mother was Queen of Navarre in her own right. All of which had been impressed upon Isabella from her babyhood, which meant that at thirteen--her age when she was married--she was a grown woman in thought and self-possession, with a very high idea of her own importance.

Two crowns of gold, studded with gems of great magnificence, were part of her outfit, with a great number of gold and silver drinking vessels, golden spoons, fifty silver porringers, twelve great silver dishes and twelve smaller ones, all for use at her own table, with specially embroidered tapestry for her rooms, where the arms of England and France were worked with plates of gold. She had, we are told, dresses of gold and silver stuff, of velvet and shot taffeta, with six of green cloth, specially woven at Dounay, six "beautifully marbled" whatever that

may mean, and six of rose-scarlet as well as a great store of rich furs. Truly the outfit of a Queen, and in addition Philip le Bel had loaded his son-in-law with rings and chains and brooches, all of finely worked gold, set with jewels. Though these were the King's personal property at the moment, it was understood they were heirlooms to descend to Isabella's children when they should be born.

So in her beauty and her pride and wealth, the girl Queen landed in England to meet with a cruel shattering of her dreams. For the few days which had elapsed since their wedding, she had been happy with her young husband. He was considered the handsomest Prince in Europe, and had inherited the splendid physique and athletic gifts which had been his father's. And he had shown all attention and care to his wife, giving her the importance she considered her due. With their landing at Dover all was changed. The King's favourite, Gaveston, who had been left as Regent in his absence, was waiting for them, and Edward's first act was to rush up to the man and throw round his neck a gold chain, one of the presents from the French King. Isabella saw and flushed with indignation, her father's gifts were not to be given away in this fashion. As she looked she saw Gaveston point to a ring on the King's hand, and that too was handed over. Worse still, Edward rode off with his favourite, paying no further attention to the girl bride, an act of indifference which bit deep into her stormy young heart. His stepmother, Queen Margaret, was at hand, to help, to comfort, to calm, and in her care the girl travelled to Eltham where she and the King were to stay until their coronation—a dual ceremony since his father was dead so lately he had not worn his crown. The Queen Mother had advised the postponement until after his marriage so that he and Isabella could be crowned together. It was a way of showing special consideration to the young Princess.

They were at Eltham for a fortnight, and before

they moved to Westminster, Gaveston had managed to get from the King every one of the jewels brought from France.

The coronation ceremony was a failure, or at least the banquet and festivities which were supposed to follow. All had been in the hands of Gaveston, and, either he had managed badly, which is not probable since when he was in Ireland he showed he was an excellent organiser, or else those about the Court had deliberately disobeyed his orders as a way of bringing him into disgrace. The crowds were ill-managed, one gentleman and a large number of "common people" were trampled to death, and when the crowning was over and the King and Queen took their seats at the high table in Westminster Hall, no banquet was ready. Plenty of provisions had been laid in, but though all guests were in their seats by three o'clock not a morsel of food was served before it was pitch dark, and though the month was February when night falls early, that must have meant a very considerable delay. What was worse from one point of view, when the food did make its appearance, it was not only badly cooked, but worse served. At such great feasts much ceremony was imposed, lords and barons became cup-bearers and servers, waiting on those of higher rank, or on guests of importance. A great crowd of the French nobility were there in Isabella's honour, but these found themselves placed at the tables without consideration of precedence and shown no consideration or honour. Deeply insulted they passed out of the Hall, and Isabella, seeing them go, knew they would take back contemptuous accounts of her new home.

Other troubles came. She who had lived in luxury found herself in a land, poverty-stricken to the verge of bankruptcy, where famine stalked in consequence of a succession of wet summers till even the Royal table was short of bread. The King could not find money to maintain his household, the expenses of his coronation went unpaid, and Isabella, accustomed

to scattering gold as she would, found herself frequently without a penny in her purse. She wrote her father a letter full of complaints against Gaveston, telling him of the fate of the jewels he had given his son-in-law, and of other jewels which she had presented to the King, and describing her husband as a miser. In that she was unjust. Poor, open-handed, spendthrift Edward had many faults, but miserliness was not amongst them. He could not let his wife have money because he had squandered away all that was left after the crushing expenses of the war with Scotland that was being waged still.

It was here the influence of the Queen Mother made itself felt. She took the young Queen under her own care, she gave wise advice, she poured oil on the troubled waters of life at the English Court, and though there were many quarrels between the young husband and his still younger wife, Isabella emerged from the ugly atmosphere in a light that can be described only as blameless.

She won golden opinions from those around her. In those first years after her marriage the English people saw her as a wronged and neglected wife who hid her troubles with brave pride.

When Edward went north to carry on the war his father had left unfinished she went with him and, while they were at Tynemouth, the darker shadow of civil war darkened over the distracted country. The Barons had risen against Gaveston, led by the Earl of Warwick, and Edward was in panic over the possible fate of his favourite. He actually left Tynemouth and the Queen, who was expecting her first child, that he might accompany Gaveston on his flight and try to raise an army in his defence.

What made matters worse was that the rebel Barons were advancing against the castle where the Queen was left, and none knew what treatment she might receive at their hands, though to be sure, there is a suggestion that she had known about the

rising from the first, and that Edward had a very fair idea of the part she had played in it.

At any rate, Thomas of Lancaster, one of the Barons, sent her a deputation assuring her that their only intention was to capture Gaveston, on which she remained at Tynemouth with more content, and here we find a record which deserves to be remembered. It is that of one of the very few good deeds set down to her credit.

In the Royal Household Book, under an entry dated October 9th, 1312, is set down: "To little Thomeline, the Scotch orphan boy, to whom the Queen, being moved to charity by his miseries, gave food and raiment to the amount of six shillings and sixpence." Later is another entry: "To the same orphan on his being sent to London to dwell with Agnes, wife of Jean, the Queen's French organist, for his education, for necessaries bought for him, and for curing his maladies, fifty-two shillings and eightpence."

Certainly the gentle influence of the Queen Mother was at work here.

Gaveston fell into the hands of the Barons when Scarborough Castle surrendered, and his execution at Warwick followed. Amongst the enormous amount of baggage he had carried all over the country were found the Crown Jewels and a great amount of treasure in the shape of other gems and ornaments which he had extorted from the King, much of which went into the Exchequer, while others again came back to the Queen. She travelled to Windsor to meet Queen Margaret and the two were together awaiting the coming of the child, and being joined by Princess Mary, the nun Princess who left her convent to be with her loved stepmother again. To Windsor Edward came also, still shaken by his passionate grief and anger at Gaveston's death, and there the Queen Mother laid his child in his arms

and brought about a complete reconciliation between husband and wife.

Afterwards, still with the Queen Mother shedding her gentle influence, Isabella brought about peace between the Barons and the King, and, Strickland says: "she conducted herself so prudently as to enjoy the confidence of all parties."

Her popularity knew no bounds. The people worshipped her, the nobles fought for her husband because it was her wish. She acted with generosity and mercy to all who appealed to her for aid, as to one Robert le Messager, who was tried by a jury for speaking disloyal words against the King and sentenced to death. Isabella saved his life, and through her influence the Archbishop of Canterbury became surety for the man's good behaviour in the future.

If Robert le Messager was the only man brought to trial for speaking disloyally about the King, many hundreds of others must have been equally guilty though they escaped punishment. Probably they took more care in choosing their company before expressing their opinions. His attempts to follow his father's example in Scotland had led to the ghastly defeat at Bannockburn. Robert the Bruce was on the Scottish throne, and the war which had lasted for years, had ended ingloriously for England. The people blamed the King personally, in which they may have been unjust, and never forgave him.

About the time of Bannockburn Isabella's second son, called John of Eltham because of his birthplace, was born, and afterwards she had a daughter who was christened Eleanor to the great joy of the Queen Mother. It was taken for granted by most people that the baby had received its name in memory of the "good Queen" who was Edward's mother, but Queen Margaret saw in the child a reincarnation of her own baby daughter, Eleanor, who had been born and died in Winchester.

In the winter of 1315 the King and Queen were

apparently united in their love for their three children, and Queen Margaret with her stepdaughter, Princess Mary, came to spend Christmas with them at Eltham. In the Household Book are many strange entries showing the gaiety with which Christmas and Twelfth Night were kept—"To William Sal Blaster valet to the Count of Poictiers, for bringing the King bunches of new grapes, ten shillings (apparently this had taken place in the autumn though the valet had to wait till Christmas for his present); to Dulcia Withstaff, mother of Robert the King's fool, coming to the King at Christmas; To the Lady Mary, the King's sister, a nun at Ambresbury, the price of fifteen pieces of tapestry with divers coats of arms, bought of Richard Horsham, mercer of London, and given to the Lady Mary on her departure from the Court, home to Ambresbury, twenty-six pounds." Which last suggests that either the Princess had her cell very handsomely furnished or that she was beautifying the church or its surrounding buildings.

The queerest entry of all does not deal with that happy Christmas but with the following Easter. There we find that three gentlemen, Sir Nicholas de Becke, Sir Humphrey de Luttlebury and Sir Thomas Latimer, were given the sum of twenty pounds for "dragging the King out of bed" on Easter morning.

Margaret, the gentle, peace-loving Queen Mother, had died and been laid to rest in Grey Friars, and Isabella had returned from a visit to France where her brother Charles le Bel had newly ascended the throne. To her fury she found that in her absence Edward had fallen under the influence of two new favourites, old Despencer and his son, Hugh, a couple who were as greedy and dissipated and altogether unpleasant as Gaveston himself. In fact they were worse. Gaveston had poetry and music and artistic

charm, but nothing remains to show the two Despencers had any such gifts.

In bitter disappointment and anger, without the influence of the Queen Mother to guide and soften her outlook, Isabella brooded over her wrongs and, for the first time, let that streak of cruelty which so far had lain dormant, show itself. To quote Strickland, "the Queen exchanged the lovely character of peace-maker for that of a vindictive, political agitator, and finally branded her once-honoured name with the foul stains of adultery, treason and murder."

Again the Barons were in revolt against their King, and Isabella was ready to throw all her influence on their side, when, on October 31st, 1321, she set out to visit the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury, deciding to spend the night at her own castle of Leeds, which was part of the dowry she had received from the King. At that time one Bartholomew Badlesmere was Governor of the castle, and when her marshal rode on in advance to announce her coming and to see that arrangements were made for her entertainment, he had the surprise of his life. Badlesmere was away, he had joined the revolting Barons and was in arms against the King, but before he left he appointed his wife commander of the castle till he should return, bidding her be careful that she admitted no strangers, especially any who might come from the King.

Lady Badlesmere was a brave woman. Also she was a very foolish one. She ought to have known that the Queen was quite ready to sympathise with those in revolt, but instead she chose to believe Isabella had come to take possession of the castle in Edward's name. Thus, when the marshal rode up to the gate to announce the arrival of Isabella, my Lady Badlesmere stood on the battlements and told him that "the Queen must seek some other lodging, for she would admit no one within the castle without an order from her lord."

Leeds is one of the few mediæval castles which

remain to-day practically entire. Standing as it does upon two islands in the middle of a lake of considerable size—when the castle was built it was reckoned the water covered fifteen acres—the place was impregnable from assault. At the end of the bridge which leads to the main fortress still stands the great gate, built by Henry III, that gate whose portcullis was closed to Isabella's marshal, and above are the battlements from which that very obstinate woman refused to let him in.

In vain the marshal argued and protested. The castle was the Queen's, he pointed out, therefore she had every right to enter, and the wrangle went on so long, it was at its height when Isabella with her train arrived. At sight of them, Lady Badlesmere became more ill-advised still. At her order the archers on the walls let fly their arrows with the result that six of the Queen's attendants fell dead.

Justifiably furious, Isabella returned to the King to lay her complaint before him, on which Edward wrote to Badlesmere asking what he and his lady meant by such outrageous conduct. If Lady Badlesmere was injudicious, her husband was a little worse. He replied telling the King that his wife had acted under his orders and that he quite approved of what she had done. The King seems to have been so taken aback by such a retort, he was unable to decide what to do; but Isabella insisted on summary vengeance and, against his will, Edward called on all the citizens of London between the ages of sixteen and sixty, to follow him to Leeds Castle to avenge the insult to the Queen.

They arrived before its walls to find Lady Badlesmere in command with her seneschal, Walter Colepepper at her side. Strickland calls the lady "a notable virago," and so she seems to have been, for she defied the King and all his men as boldly as she had insulted the Queen. She counted on the Barons coming to her aid, but the nobles, headed by Lancaster, were far too wise to openly offend the

Queen, so kept away. After a siege lasting about a fortnight, the castle surrendered. The seneschal who, poor man, acted only on the orders of his mistress, was hanged from the chains of the draw-bridge with eleven of his men, while Lady Badlesmere was taken to London and imprisoned in the Tower. Excepting that she remained in close confinement for some months, she seems to have escaped punishment, but a year later her husband, falling into the hands of the King, was beheaded for his folly. So were several important Barons, including Lancaster, who had risen in revolt more against the Despencers than against the King. No one seemed quite certain why Badlesmere died, whether because of his part in the insurrection or as punishment of his wife's folly at Leeds.

For the present Isabella was as popular with the people as ever. Those men of London "between the ages of sixty and sixteen," who had flocked to besiege Leeds Castle, did so because they believed they were avenging an insult shown to their Queen. Soon after the death of Badlesmere she took up her residence in the State apartments of the Tower to await the birth of another child. The exact site occupied by the Royal residence is not known with certainty, but it is believed it consisted of a range of buildings between the Salt Tower and the Lantern Tower, since these adjoin the Queen's Garden. Probably the State apartments were no more than a collection of rooms of lath and plaster, such jerry building being by no means unknown in the Middle Ages. We are told that when the Queen's baby was born, a little girl named Joanna and destined to become Queen of Scotland, the roof of the Royal apartments was in such a condition that the rain, pouring in, drenched mother and child as they lay in bed. Edward hearing of this promptly dismissed the Constable of the Tower, John de Cromwell, and appointed Sir Stephen Seagrave in his stead. And as Sir Stephen was particularly anxious to win the

favour of Isabella, he tried in every way to make up for the carelessness of his predecessor.

By way of interesting her he told her of two prisoners who had been brought to the Tower, during the time she had been staying here. Both were named Roger Mortimer, but the one was an old man who had died since his arrival. As a matter of fact he had been shut in a very deep and dark dungeon and his warders had forgotten he was there. He had died, that old man, of neglect and thirst and starvation, which was considered unfortunate, but for which no one was punished. Why should they be, when it was known the King was glad to have one enemy the less, and the crime of the Mortimers was that they had joined the Barons in their revolt against the Despencers.

"And the other Roger Mortimer?" Isabella asked, perhaps not so carelessly as appeared. These prisoners were enemies of the Despencers, therefore they were her friends. Her interest in them, her pity for them, were acute.

"Oh, he is alive," the Constable returned indifferently. "We shall keep him in safe custody until . . . he dies."

That interest of the Queen's grew greater. Perhaps in justice we may say it was woman's pity for a condemned and hopeless man that stirred her as well, and when she left her sick bed she decided to see the prisoner of whom she had heard so much. It is very doubtful if she told Seagrave of her determination. He wanted to please her, certainly, but she would hardly have gone openly about such work. More probably she approached a man named Gerald Alspaye, who has been described as the Constable's valet though probably his secretary and confidential attendant is what is meant. Alspaye was Mortimer's friend, also he was ready to accept a bribe, which means he was a ready tool to Isabella's hand.

They brought Mortimer out of his dungeon, still wearing the clanking chains that bit into his flesh,



ISABELLA OF FRANCE

From her statuette on the tomb of her son, John of Eltham, in
Westminster Abbey.

and so led him to the Royal Apartment where the Queen waited. He knelt before her. She saw a man in the prime of athletic life, since even the horrors of his imprisonment could not wear down his strength, she met the mesmeric fire in his passionate eyes, and her heart was stirred as never before. She has been called an adulteress and truly, but she had been no unfaithful wife until she fell under the spell of Mortimer. Wilful and arrogant she had shown herself, but for that her upbringing was to be blamed, and apart from her anger against the Badlesmeres there is no hint of cruelty in her conduct. From the moment of that meeting with the chained prisoner her character altered. Strickland suggests it was the death of the Queen Mother of gentle influence, which accounted for the alteration, but surely it was rather the mesmeric influence of the thoroughly bad man, to whom Isabella surrendered soul and body.

How often they met during those first days we do not know. Isabella returned to her husband, and all that can be said definitely, is that Mortimer was reprieved from his death sentence though he was to be kept in imprisonment for life. All about the Court were surprised at the King's clemency and the Despencers were furious. Plainly some very strong influence had been at work in the prisoner's favour and the public believed it was that of Adam Orleton, Bishop of Hereford, the most infamous scoundrel who ever disgraced the Church. Quite probably Orleton was instrumental. He knew Mortimer well since the latter had his home on the Welsh border, but also the Bishop was the Queen's man, and, though false to everyone else, seems to have been faithful to her.

At any rate, Mortimer was reprieved, also he was moved from his dungeon to a room that had some degree of comfort and was near the State Apartments, on which Isabella decided she preferred the Tower to any other of her palaces. Presently came rumours that Mortimer was to die. He was accused

of engineering a new rebellion from his prison, though it is difficult to see how he could have done that with any success. Most probably the charge was trumped up by the Despencers, but, whether he were guilty or not, his danger was acute and Isabella was sick with terror.

At any moment Edward might order the axe to fall to end the life of the man who was so dear to the guilty Queen. Again she was in the Tower, again Mortimer visited her, more easily now since his prison was near her palace, and together they plotted a desperate scheme by which, with the aid of Alspaye, he might escape. The plan included the swimming of the Thames, to gain the Surrey bank, and the river was wider than it is to-day, with many swirling currents caused by the narrow arches of London Bridge. The time was high summer, when the river would be at its lowest as a rule, but those wet seasons had continued, and the tide ran more strongly than was usual at that time of year.

For a swimmer in full training, the crossing would have been dangerous, while for months Mortimer had been in close confinement and during the earlier part of the time had been kept short of food under conditions that must have undermined the strongest constitution. All this Isabella realized, and at their last meeting as Queen and prisoner, she clung to him in passionate abandonment, with bitter tears and many prayers. Rymer, the contemporary historian, sums up her anguish in a few words : "The Queen doubted much of his strength for such an exploit as he had been long in confinement."

All had to be risked. Making the effort to escape he had a chance of life, if he remained death in some form was certain.

Exactly where his later prison was situated we do not know, but we are told he had managed to "cut a hole through the wall into the Royal kitchen." As Richard Davey, the historian of the Tower, points out, that makes it certain he was not shut up in any

of the dungeons of the White Tower where the main kitchen was . . . there could be no question of his cutting a way through those walls. But we know the Queen's Lodgings were jerry-built and probably the kitchen was an auxiliary one built for the preparation of Isabella's food.

At any rate that secret hole was made in the wall, and on the night of August 1st, 1323, the prisoner's throw for life and liberty was made. Isabella supplied Alspaye with "a sleepy drink" which he put into the wine of the Constable and the guard . . . according to one story, the day was Mortimer's birthday and he invited the Constable to drink his health, pledging him in the drugged wine. However that may be, sleep with unnatural heaviness, Sir Stephen Seagrave and his men most certainly did, and in dead of night Mortimer crept through the hole in the wall into the kitchen . . . whose huge chimney offered a way of escape to the roof of the Queen's Lodgings, which adjoined the Lantern Tower guarding the wharf at the corner of the moat where it ran into the river.

We are not told that Isabella was waiting on the roof to bid her lover a last farewell, yet surely she told her women that she could not sleep that night and must take the air upon the battlements. So she had waited till he appeared, and under the midnight sky they bade each other good-bye, despairing of meeting again, yet trying to hope for reunion in spite of all.

He tore himself from her arms, and creeping in the shadow of the battlements gained the roof of the Lantern Tower. There a ladder of rope awaited him. By its aid he passed down the wall to the water's edge and struck out for the further shore. Alspaye was there, with seven horsemen, all loyal servants of Mortimer, and having a spare horse ready. Mounted, they rode to the Hampshire coast where a rowing boat was ready . . . every detail had been carefully planned. Somehow the report was spread that the

fugitive was rowing to the Isle of Wight from whence he wanted to find a ship to take him to Wales, but in reality he boarded a large vessel anchored off the Needles, which had been provided by a London merchant named Rafe Bottom who was some relation of Alspaye. On that ship Mortimer gained Normandy and at once Isabella began the treacherous work that would enable her to join him.

Within the next year the breach between Isabella and her husband widened. It has been said that when he returned from a futile expedition against the Scots she discovered she had lost her influence over him, but the truth is that in her obsession for Mortimer she no longer wished to see her husband, still less did she trouble to use any influence over him. The wretched man was harassed almost to the point of breaking down. The Scotland his father had spent so much blood and money to gain, was lost, the famine-ridden land was in revolt, enemies surrounded him on every side, and in despair he clung more closely to the Despencers, believing them his only friends. They were his worst enemies.

With extraordinary effrontery Isabella fanned the flame of popular indignation against him, even stating publicly that it was the Despencers who had brought about the death of Badlesmere. What was more remarkable is most people seem to have believed her, though even those with the shortest of memories must have known how and why that unfortunate gentleman had died.

While things were in this turmoil, she suggested to Edward that she should go to France to negotiate a loan from her brother, Charles le Bel. At his wits' end for money, Edward agreed and to France she went, not meaning to do anything about the loan. Mortimer was in France which was all that mattered to her.

Mortimer, however, had different views. He was living in exile and was not in good odour at the Court since rumours of his affair with the Queen had reached Charles. Also his wife, Jane, Lady Mortimer, was a French lady of importance, and he had left her and her children behind in England as if he hardly remembered their existence.

Thus, when Isabella reached Paris, she found Mortimer waiting for her and in her joy at being with him everything else was forgotten. Soon he told her his plans. Let them get possession of young Edward, the Prince of Wales, when the next step would be to get his father to abdicate on which they would declare the boy King with Mortimer as regent. He had left England as a fugitive, but he meant to return to it with Royal power. And Isabella agreed to all. She had no will apart from his.

Cunningly she wrote to Edward. Her brother Charles would not consider granting a loan unless the King should do homage to him for the Duchy of Guienne and the Earldom of Ponthieu, she said, but as he realised it would be difficult for Edward to leave his country, he was ready to accept the homage of the boy Prince. Would the King therefore dispatch the Prince of Wales to the French Court without delay?

That Edward should fall into the trap is understandable, he was too foolish to do anything else, but the Despencers seem to have been cunning intriguers, and it is remarkable they should see no danger in this plan. They did not protest against it, that is certain, or Edward would not have agreed, and thus on September 25th, 1325, the thirteen-year-old boy set out from Dover to join his mother in Paris.

From that period Isabella first exercised her influence over any of her children, and she did it now only to make the boy her partisan and to embitter him against his most unhappy father. Of all the crimes laid to her charge in these later years—and they are so manifold and so inhuman

it is difficult to think of her as a woman—none was worse than the guile and craft which distorted the mind of that lad, and made him hate the man he had loved before.

Presently Bishop Stapleton of Exeter, who had accompanied the Prince of Wales to France, returned to England to put the true state of affairs very plainly before the King, and tell him that the son he loved very dearly was under the influence of Isabella and Mortimer. This seems the first knowledge the King had had of the other man's power. At once Edward wrote to his wife, later he wrote to his son, and whatever opinion we have of the King's folly and extravagances and vices, those letters show he possessed a dignity and pathos in time of need which present him in a different light.

Charles le Bel changed his opinion of his sister . . . at first he had thought of her as a wronged woman flying from the persecutions of a particularly unsatisfactory husband . . . she made her own case good. Now he came to some understanding of the truth and in the end "commanded her to leave his kingdom immediately or he would make her leave it with shame."

The order upset the plans Mortimer was making. Matters were so bad the French nobles were forbidden to speak to her, and Charles had a plan for making her, the Prince of Wales and Mortimer prisoners and handing them over to King Edward.

In dead of night one of the French knights, Robert of Artois, came to warn the guilty queen what was afoot, and in panic she fled from France, taking the Prince with her. Mortimer shared the flight, of course, and with them went Edmund of Kent, King Edward's half-brother, the younger of the two sons of Margaret of France, one of the children the dying Edward I had commended to the care of his son. The charm and cunning of Isabella had been at work here also, and for the moment Edmund of Kent was the Queen's devoted follower.

Froissart's account of how she gathered followers and prepared to descend on England at the head of a small army, gives a vivid picture of her power over men, if it is read aright between the lines.

"The arrival of the Queen of England (at Ostrevant in Hainault) was soon known in the house of the good Count of Hainault, who was then at Valenciennes. Sir John, his brother, was likewise informed at the hour when she alighted. This Sir John, being at that time very young, and panting for glory like a knight errant, mounted his horse and, accompanied by a few persons, arrived in the evening to pay the Queen every respect and honour.

"... the Queen made a lamentable complaint to him which affected Sir John so greatly he mixed his tears with hers, and said :

"Lady, here is your knight who will not fail to die for you, though everyone else should forsake you. Therefore I will do everything in my power to conduct you safely to England with your son, and restore you to your rightful rank with the assistance of your friends in those parts. And I, and all those I can influence, will risk our lives on the adventure for your sake. And we shall have a sufficient armed force, if it please God, without fearing any danger from the King of France."

"The Queen, who was sitting down with Sir John standing before her, would have cast herself at his feet, but he caught her in his arms and said :

"God forbid that the Queen of England should do any such thing as kneel to me. Madame, be of good comfort to yourself and your companions, for I will keep my promise. And you shall come and see my brother and the countess his wife and all their fine children, who will be rejoiced to see you for I have heard them say so."

"The Queen answered : 'Sir, I find in you more comfort and courtesy than in all the world besides. I owe you five hundred thousand thanks for all you have promised me, with so much kindness. I and my

son shall be forever bound to you, and we will put the Kingdom of England under your management as in justice it ought to be.'"

Apparently Sir John believed her promises, though he ought to have known there was no possibility of her keeping them with Mortimer waiting to be declared Regent. However, the whole party went to visit the Count and during their stay there the young knight, still obsessed by the cause of the wronged and lovely woman as he pictured the Queen, wrote to his friends in Brabant and Bohemia, calling on them to gather at Dort to sail with him across the seas.

When the time for setting out came, the Count was anxious to prevent his brother sailing on such an adventure. Probably the older man was not so easily fascinated by Isabella and had come to a more shrewd opinion of her character. Sir John insisted and had his way in the end ; the words in which he declared himself Isabella's man till death show his youthful ardour and gallant chivalry as no other description could do.

" My dear lord and brother," he said, " I am young and I believe God has inspired me with a desire for this enterprise. I also believe for certain that this lady and her son have been driven from her kingdom wrongfully. If it is for the glory of God we should comfort the afflicted, how much more it is to help and succour one who is the daughter of a king, descended from Royal lineage, and to whose blood we are ourselves related. I will renounce everything here, and take up the cross in heathendom beyond the seas, if this good lady is allowed to leave us without comfort. But if you will grant me willing leave, I shall do well and accomplish my purpose."

The Count gave way and when Dort was reached Isabella found a force of two thousand seven hundred and fifty seven adventurers waiting to fight under her banner, with gallant Sir John at their head. Ships

were ready also, and the Royal party put to sea, only to encounter a great storm which drove them out of their reckoning so that when land was sighted they had no idea to what country it belonged . . . which is an interesting sidelight on the conditions of navigation in the fourteenth century. About noon they landed on a wide and desolate strand, a poor remnant of the armada which had set out from Dort, since several of their ships had been wrecked and others had turned back or had been lost . . . there was no trace of their fate. Isabella with the Prince and Mortimer, Edmund of Kent and Sir John were all saved, and at once : " Her knights and attendants made her a house of four carpets, open at the front, where they kindled a great fire with pieces of wreck."

There she remained until dawn, by which time others of the company had managed to get ashore, and had spread over the country, harrying and robbing lonely villages and farms. As soon as it was light, a great company of people came to complain of these robberies, and from them Isabella made the discovery that she was in England, not very far from Harwich. At once she paid those who had lost grain or cattle, which so delighted them that they joined her in a great procession, singing her praises, as, in triumph, she entered Harwich, where a great welcome was given her.

To quote Strickland : " It was wonderful how the common people flocked to Isabella. . . . Every generous feeling in the English character had been worked upon by her emissaries. . . . It was asserted she had been driven into a foreign land by plots against her life, that she was the most oppressed of queens, the most injured of wives. So blinding was the excitement which pervaded all classes that the glaring falsehood of her statement was forgotten. The improprieties of her conduct which had caused the King of France to expel her with contempt from his dominions were regarded as base calumnies uttered by the Despencers. The fact that she came

with her paramour, attended by a band of foreign mercenaries, to raise the standard of revolt against her husband and sovereign, having abused her maternal influence on the youthful heir of England, excited no moral or religious reprobation in the nation."

Hearing of the Queen's landing Edward lost his head altogether. He offered a reward of two thousand pounds for the head of Mortimer . . . more probably the elder Despencer issued the proclamation in the King's name . . . and after that made no effort at offence or defence. He simply ran away to Bristol where he had friends, the two Despencers going with him.

At the head of an ever-growing army, Isabella with her son and Mortimer swept through England. At Oxford, which they took on their way to London, they attended service in the cathedral to listen to a sermon by Adam Orleton, the Bishop of Hereford, who actually stood up in the pulpit and called upon his congregation to kill the King. From thence they went to London to find the city in turmoil. With Edward's flight all law and order had come to an end, Stapleton, the loyal Bishop of Exeter, had tried to keep order, only to be kicked to death in the street and his head was cut off to be presented to Isabella. Once she and Mortimer were in the city they ordered all prison doors to be opened, all criminals to be released. The streets were thronged with outlaws, murder and rapine ran riot.

Instead of staying in London to try to bring back some form of order, Isabella and Mortimer hastened westward, and on reaching Bristol found the city ready to withstand a siege. Its resistance did not last long. Its defences fell and old Despencer—he was ninety years of age—was brought before the Queen as prisoner. The King and Despencer the younger, had taken a last refuge in Bristol castle.

Isabella sat in judgment on that old, old man, though the actual sentence was passed by Sir Thomas

Trussell who was deputed to see that it was carried out. They dragged the helpless prisoner to the street outside the castle so that the King and his companion, standing at an upper window, might see what was done. Literally Despencer was cut to pieces alive, then hoisted, not quite dead, upon a high gallows where his body swung for four days, after which it was divided into four parts and left in the gutter for the scavenger dogs to devour.

Little wonder that Edward and the younger Despencer fled in panic, leaving the castle by night in a small boat. Fate was against them, the next day or the day after—accounts vary in detail—they were captured, and while Edward was taken to Kenilworth, Isabella and Mortimer set out for London, dragging the wretched Despencer in their train.

With the horror of his father's fate before his eyes, the prisoner tried to escape his tormentors by starvation. He refused to eat, with the result that by the time Hereford was reached he was so nearly dead Isabella decided to try him there and then. They crowned him with nettles when they dragged him, unconscious, into her presence, and even when the stinging leaves were pressed into his eyeballs he gave no sign of life. Yet he lived, to be half revived so that he might die in ghastly torment. Isabella was present at the execution.

5

Isabella the Queen who had been generous to a forlorn orphan . . . the lady of refinement and education . . . the wife who had used her influence over her husband for good . . . had vanished. The last trace of womanhood left her nature when she sat in Hereford Castle to see Despencer die. From that time she was the she wolf indeed, her soul possessed by a devil, knowing no mercy, no truth.

She and Mortimer returned to the Tower, he a captive no longer but treated as a prince, given kingly power. The first check to their plans came from young Edward the Prince of Wales. When they told him his father was to be deposed that he might ascend the throne, he retorted he would not accept the crown unless it were surrendered voluntarily by his father.

Adam Orleton and Trussell, two of the cruellest men in the Kingdom, were sent to Kenilworth to "persuade" the King to abdicate. Their mission succeeded. Somehow the scruples of the young Prince of Wales—he was just fifteen—were overruled, and on Christmas Day, 1326, he was duly crowned at Westminster. Much feasting followed in which gallant Sir John of Hainault took part, but in the New Year he returned to his own land, with the knowledge that he had raised Isabella to despotic power. Whether he was satisfied with the result of his devotion, is doubtful. Probably he was not, or he would have remained in England. It was impossible for any man of reason to continue her devoted knight as the new side of her character became more and more into prominence. Edmund of Kent was another of those who came to an awakening, and in disgust at her conduct returned to France.

On the fate of Edward there is no need to linger. Adam Orleton planned the tragedy, but it was with the connivance of Isabella and Mortimer. So perhaps the most cruel murder ever known was carried out. At midnight the cries of a dying man rang from Berkeley Castle, and, as Edward's devoted servant, De la Moor, tells us: "Many a one awoke and prayed God for the harmless soul which that night was departing in torture."

Rumours of that most awful murder reached Edmund of Kent in France and he returned to England, determined to find out the truth. The last he had heard of his half-brother was that he had

been imprisoned in Corfe Castle, and to Corfe he rode directly he had landed in England. Isabella had heard of his landing, and by her orders the constable of the castle found a man who resembled the dead King to a striking degree. When Edmund presented himself at the gate he was assured the King was quite well, but when he "boldly demanded to be taken to the apartment of his brother" he was told that was impossible. He might look through a window where he would see the one-time King reading a book.

To this Edmund agreed, and was taken to a narrow opening, in the grim walls through which he looked to see a man sitting by a flickering fire reading, and he had no doubt he the prisoner was his brother. We may take it there was little light beyond that of the uncertain flames which would add to the illusion.

Turning away he asked for writing materials and wrote a letter to the King, begging his pardon for having helped the Queen in her revolt and assuring him of his loyalty in the future. That letter he gave to the constable of the castle who sent it to Isabella. And she, forgetting the chivalrous help Edmund had given her in the past, forgetting everything indeed excepting her own vindictive hate and her terror lest her part in her husband's fate should come to light, issued orders that he was to be arrested and immediately executed on the charge of high treason. The only evidence against him was that letter he had written to his supposed brother and a story that a certain necromancer in London had told him he had "conjured up a spirit which had declared Edward still lived."

The arrest took place at Winchester and there the Earl was condemned to die. The boy King, who was devoted to his uncle, heard of the sentence with horror and tried to save him, but was "so beset by his mother the Queen and by Mortimer it was impossible for him to make any efforts to preserve

his uncle from the cruel fate to which he was unjustly doomed."

With the young King powerless, popular opinion was roused to indignation and all sympathy went to Edmund of Kent. Even the executioner stole away out of Winchester city that he might not carry out the sentence, and in all the troops stationed there not a man could be found to take his place. In desperation, a messenger rode hot haste all through the night—the sentence had been pronounced on Sunday, March 13th—to the Marshalsea prison where a brutal creature lay in the deepest dungeon, awaiting death for some particularly callous crime. When morning broke they roused him from his straw not to take him out to die as he expected, but to offer him his life and liberty if he would wield the axe that was to end the life of gallant Edmund of Kent.

Early on the Monday morning they brought the Earl to the scaffold they had erected at the gate of Winchester Castle, and there, with a refinement of cruelty they kept him waiting until five in the afternoon, when horses came galloping through the city and the felon from the Marshalsea arrived to do his dreadful work.

So died Edmund, younger son of gentle Margaret of France, the "little brother" the dying Edward had commended to his elder son. At once Isabella gave his estates and wealth to Mortimer, at which Mortimer styled himself Prince, the people had another name for him. "There was a Parliament," says Walsingham, "where Roger Mortimer was in such glory and honour it was without all comparison, and a greater route waited at his heels than upon the King's person. He would suffer the King to rise to him, and would walk with him equally, step by step, never preferring the King, but would go foremost himself with his officers."

It was the pride that goes before a fall. Of all Isabella's mistakes that cruel execution of Edmund

of Kent was the worst. Public opinion veered, and only sullen looks greeted her where there had been cheers before.

The young King grew up. A boy no longer, he was able to gauge aright the vile influence of the Queen Mother. He saw how she had worked upon his boyish affection for her own ends, how she had betrayed his trust in her. To do him justice he seems to have laid the whole blame upon Mortimer, in which perhaps he was right, but the spell the guilty Queen had exercised over him was ended for ever. As Queen and as Mother she had used her power for evil, and the time of reckoning was at hand.

With Mortimer she took refuge in Nottingham Castle at a time when Parliament was being held in the town, and for her own quarters had what was called the Old Tower, the strongest part of the building. In deference to public opinion, which was as strong against her now as it had been in her favour before, she arranged that Mortimer should have rooms in a different part of the castle, but the seneschal, Robert of Holland, who knew all the secrets of the place, had shown her a hidden passage through the living rock by which her lover could come to her from his rooms. In the days of the Ancient Britons Nottingham was known as "The Town of Caves," since the sand rock on which it stands is a honeycomb of rock cellars and hidden ways, and the builders of the castle had made the most of these paths through the heart of the living rock.

Edward, coming to Nottingham to attend the Parliament, determined to take drastic steps to end the scandal between his mother and her lover, and one of his loyal followers, Sir Hugh Montague, made friends with Robert of Holland. By bribery or threats—we have no means of knowing which was used—he learned of the secret passage between the rooms of Mortimer and the apartments

of the Queen Mother in the Old Tower. But he learned more than that. The passage did not lead only from one part of the castle to the other, it, or at least a branch, led downwards to the foot of the castle hill, having an opening to the meadows which covered the site of the present railway, close to a well or spring which gushed from the rock. Of this exit and entrance Isabella knew nothing, she believed she and Mortimer were safe in the fortress, though plainly she was beset with fears since she ordered all doors must be locked and the keys must be brought to her each night that she might sleep with them under her pillow. The whole place was doubly garrisoned with followers of Mortimer.

The information Montague had gleaned from Robert de Holland made all her care in vain. King Edward determined to lead a band of desperate followers into the castle by that secret way, and make Roger Mortimer pay—if payment were possible—for the harm he had done.

That secret passage, called Mortimer's Hole because of the work done on that October night, exists still and holiday parties for a small payment, tread its steep way with laughter. It wore a different aspect to the little band of stern avengers who gathered in the meadow where the spring gushed, and there were joined by one who was to be their guide. Bushes screening the entrance to the narrow cave were parted, one by one, with hardly deadened clank of arms, the men filed into the darkness. Torches were lighted, the smoky glare revealing that the cleft went further and further into the rock, taking an upward direction. Climbing with difficulty, for the path was steep with many a twist and turn, they went on in silence. The work of vengeance had begun.

"On a certain night," says Stowe, "the King and his friends were brought by torch-light through a secret way, underground, beginning far from the castle, till they came even to the Queen's chamber.

They with naked swords in their hands went forward, leaving the King without the chamber door.

"They slew Sir Hugh Turpington who resisted them, and to Sir John Neville they gave a deadly wound. From thence they went to the Queen Mother whom they found with Mortimer, ready to go to bed. Having seized him, they led him into the room, the Queen following, distracted, crying out: 'Fair son . . . fair son . . . pity my gentle Mortimer,' for she knew her son was there though she saw him not. She likewise entreated Montague to do no harm to Mortimer, because he was a worthy knight and her well-loved friend."

The scene was terrible. Mortimer, taken unarmed, fighting with his fists till they dragged him from the room half unconscious, the dishevelled woman pleading frantically for his life, the young King stern and unrelenting with a firmness beyond his years . . . he was not quite eighteen . . . and on the other side of the locked doors a great tumult of Mortimer's men, who tried to get in to save their lord but were kept back by the very efforts Isabella had made for his safety. If those keys had not been beneath her pillow, history would have been written differently.

Before any attempt at rescue could be made, they dragged Mortimer down that secret path to the meadows where horses waited. When dawn came he was well on his way to London and Isabella, lying prostrate on her bed, heard shouts which told her how little the adoration of a crowd is worth. So short a time before she had been the idol of the public, the people had rushed to cheer her when she and her lover rode through the streets, now they were exulting in his downfall and hooting her as the worst of women.

Retribution had begun indeed.

They hurried Mortimer to London and for a few hours he was shut up in the Tower . . . that place of so many memories for him. His trial followed

swiftly, he was found guilty of treason against the dead King . . . a mild charge considering the horror of that Royal murder, and sentenced to instant execution. For some reason, probably because his trial had been at Westminster, he was taken to a place called the Elms beside the purling stream of the Tyburn, and there was hanged. His was the first gibbet to be erected on that spot which became the place of public execution soon afterwards.

Prisoner though she was, Isabella seems to have had some influence still, since the mangled corpse of her lover was given burial in the church of the Grey Friars by St. Paul's, that church which contained so many Royal tombs, and where Margaret of France was lying.

With Mortimer dead Edward took no further vengeance for his father's murder, but he dispossessed his mother of the enormous jointure she had voted to herself, settling on her a thousand a year, which was a very good income considering the then value of money. She was kept a prisoner in Castle Rising in Norfolk, where he saw that she had a retinue of knights and ladies to wait on her. She never recovered from the shock of that tragic night in Nottingham Castle and it is believed her reason gave way. In charity let us hope that madness began before her imprisonment, her crimes could be forgiven to a woman who was not sane.

She lived in her prison for eight and twenty years, dying on August 22nd, 1358, when she was sixty-three years of age. Through all that time she never ceased to mourn for her lost lover, and there is a tradition that always on the anniversary of his execution she sat up all night, calling on his name, making the darkness terrible with her lamentations. And still the ruins of Castle Rising are haunted by her memories. When the wind wails round the stones, the people remember the voice of the dead Queen and shudder.

When she died they carried her to the church of

the Grey Friars by her own wish, thus laying her within the walls that held the body of her lover. By a strange coincidence her youngest child, that Princess Joanna of the Tower who had been born just before the meeting with Mortimer, had died a few weeks earlier, and her body also was brought to Grey Friars. Dramatic coincidence could hardly go further than that of this tradition, that the funeral processions of the two Queens entered the church on the same day, the one having approached London from the north and the other by the eastern road, and thus the mother and daughter who had not seen each other for thirty years, met in death to lie side by side before the great altar.

VII

JOANNA OF NAVARRE

THE WIDOW WITH NINE CHILDREN WHO BECAME
A QUEEN

THE State prisons of Paris were uncomfortable places in the late fourteenth century, and in one of them little Princess Joanna of Navarre spent several years of her young life with her brothers . . . they were the children of Charles the Bad and for a time their lives were in danger from the many enemies their father had made. Rumour went that Charles was a magician who practised Black Magic, and hardly the Borgias themselves had greater knowledge of secret poisons or put their knowledge to more terrible use. Men . . . and women . . . who offended Charles of Navarre, died in agony and none could say by whom their death was caused. Suspicion ran riot, and the innocent girl in her prison was remembered only as the child of a wizard at whose door those mystery deaths were laid.

She was released at last, through the influence of the King of Castile, but life was forlorn and uncertain still, so she turned with gratitude to the Duke of Bretagne, when he sent an embassy to her father proposing to marry her.

It was not to be a romantic marriage. Quite apart from the fact that the two people most concerned had never met, there was a very great difference in years between them. Joanna was a young girl, while her intending bridegroom had not only been

married twice already, but had the reputation of being the worst-tempered man in Europe.

The queer marriage was a greater success than might have been suspected, chiefly, we may take it, because of the tact of the young wife. Also John of Bretagne was a model of manly beauty, we are told, and had retained his good looks when he married Joanna who was young enough to have been his granddaughter. It appears that all his three wives were devoted to him, from which it has been gathered that he did not exercise his bad temper at home.

That bad temper kept him in a state of constant arms. He quarrelled with every neighbour and generally was at war with two or three at once, yet Joanna seems to have been quite happy, and to have had a great influence over the terrible old man. Nine children were born to her, and as his other marriages had been childless, the little ones helped to strengthen her power over their father.

So matters stood when an armed messenger rode up to the castle at Vannes where John the Valiant kept his court, with news that flung the old man into another of his rages. Henry Bolingbroke had been banished from England by King Richard II and was at Blois, but hesitated to go further into Bretagne being uncertain as to his welcome. When he had landed at Boulogne the Duke of Burgundy had tried to arrest him and he was by no means sure what his welcome in this other Dukedom might be.

"Let him stay away if he mistrusts my welcome," said John the Valiant in his towering rage. "I want no man here who does not think himself good enough for my hospitality."

Joanna soothed her husband, she reminded him that the Earl of Lancaster, Henry's father, had been his warmest friend amongst the English nobles, and that Henry had been accustomed to call him "my good uncle" since the Duke's first wife had been Mary of England, daughter of Edward III and therefore aunt to Bolingbroke.

The memory of that first wife who had died while in her teens, further softened the old man. Grudgingly he sent an escort to bring the guest to his castle, and thus, Henry Bolingbroke and Joanna of Navarre met for the first time. He saw a young and gracious matron, little children by her side, married to that old man who patently adored her. On her part she knew that a handsome man in the prime of life was bowing before her. Already he was a widower and the father of six children, but he had married young, and was quite youthful compared to John the Valiant. He had the graces of Court education and considerable learning, and there can be no doubt that from that moment of their meeting he and Joanna were attracted to each other.

How long Henry stayed at Vannes is uncertain, but it must have been for some considerable time, since there he perfected his plans for returning to England and wresting the throne from King Richard. John the Valiant was ready to help him with ships and men and money, anything in the way of a fight was welcome to the old man, and when Bolingbroke left it was at the head of a large army conveyed in three of the Bretagne ships. On the sails of those ships as on the surcoats of his men, Henry had embroidered a badge in the form of a little blue flower, the forget-me-not, and legend—not history—declares that before he rode away he gave a sprig of forget-me-not to the Duchess of Bretagne.

A few months later old John the Valiant died, the wife of one of his enemies, Margaret, Countess of Penthierves, being accused of having killed him by magic spells. Whether she had any hand in his end is uncertain . . . quite possibly poison had been at work . . . but there is no doubt of her hatred of Joanna and the latter's children, and her anxiety to see Bretagne pass into her husband's hands. She rushed to the room where her father was, and in great agitation made one of the most cruel requests that ever left a woman's lips.

" My lord, my father, it now depends on you if ever my husband recovers the lands of Bretagne which are his by right. We have such beautiful children, I beseech you to assist us for their sakes."

" What would you have me do ? " her father, Sir Oliver Clisson asked. He had been at daggers drawn with old John the Valiant for years, and knew all about the claim of de Penthierves to the Duchy of Bretagne.

" Can you not slay the nine little children of the dead Duke ? " she demanded coolly. " There is just time to get the deed done before the Duke of Burgundy can arrive to protect them."

If Sir Oliver had been a different man the fate of Joanna and her children would have been sealed, but fortunately it was on his own daughter that the knight's anger fell. He was horrified she should plot the murder of that other woman's babies.

" ' Ah, cruel and perverse woman,' her father cried in a burst of virtuous indignation, ' thou shalt die, for if thou livest thou wilt be the cause of involving thy children in infamy.'

" Drawing his sword he would have slain her if she had not fled screaming from his presence ; but she did not wholly escape punishment, for in her haste she fell, breaking her thigh bone, of the which she was lame for all the rest of her life."

What a picture of family life in the days of Chivalry.

Two years after the death of her first husband Joanna of Navarre came to England already the Queen of Henry IV, since they had been married by proxy. Matters had been complicated and the betrothal full of difficulty, the fact that poor Richard II had died at Pontefract and that Bolingbroke was secure on the throne, hardly helped matters. To begin with there was the question of

relationship though there was no blood tie between them. Yet her dead husband's first wife had been King Henry's aunt and the prohibited degrees were far reaching in those days. Worse still, Henry had been educated with a strong leaning towards the teachings of Wyclif and though on ascending the throne he had sworn his devotion to the Church of Rome, a numerous party against him called him a renegade. All of which made him particularly anxious not to do anything that might offend the Pope, while the French Court made it plain the King was opposed to the marriage when rumour of it reached him. Joanna, not Henry, managed everything, however, and, already a Queen to all intents and purposes, she set sail for England, leaving her sons behind in the Duke of Burgundy's care. She had intended bringing all her children with her to England, but Burgundy dissuaded her from such a step. There is an ugly story that he bribed her to surrender the children by the gift of a diamond collar, which may or may not be true. It is certain that for all her many good points Joanna was particularly fond of money and greedy for the possession of jewels.

Three weeks after her arrival in England she was crowned at Westminster (February 26th, 1403), and Strickland described "an exquisite drawing in a contemporary MS." which illustrates her coronation. "She is represented as a very majestic and graceful woman in the meridian glory of her days with a form of the most symmetrical proportions, and a countenance of equal beauty . . . She is enthroned, not by the side of her Royal husband, but in a chair of State, placed singly under a rich canopy. Two archbishops have just crowned her, and are still supporting the Royal diadem on her head. In her right hand she holds a sceptre and in her left an orb surmounted by a cross . . . a very unusual attribute for a Queen-Consort as it is the symbol of sovereignty and could only have been



JOANNA OF NAVARRE
From her monument in Canterbury Cathedral.

allowed to Queen Joanna as a very special mark of her Royal bridegroom's favour."

In the twelve years of her marriage with Henry, so far as her domestic life was concerned all was peace. At different times she had the happiness of welcoming to her new home at least two of the sons she had left behind in Bretagne and though the little daughters she had brought with her were taken back to France to be educated at the Courts of the Princes to whom they were betrothed, all that was the custom of the times and no more than was to be expected. Henry's devotion never faltered, but from the first his son, Henry Prince of Wales, was antagonistic. "Prince Hal," was sowing his wild oats, his father was angry with him in consequence, and rightly or wrongly the lad attributed the trouble to the influence of his stepmother.

In 1413 King Henry's illness took a more serious turn. For years his health had been failing. Though he was only forty-seven we are told he seemed an old man, and the leprosy from which he had suffered secretly for years, attacked his face. In an outburst of penitence he acknowledged that he had been proud of his clear skin and regular features, now all were destroyed, he could not venture to show himself, living in dreadful seclusion, hiding his altered face behind a veil when obliged to appear before his advisers. Through all his suffering the Queen was his devoted attendant. As she had nursed and cared for old John the Valiant during his last and mysterious sickness, so now she comforted and soothed Henry of England, hardly leaving the sick bed to which he was confined for months.

Apart from his leprosy, he suffered from some form of catalepsy since we are told that he would lie for hours in a death-like trance, giving no sign of life.

Their last Christmas together (1412) they spent in strict seclusion at Eltham, but in February he was a little better and able to travel to Westminster. A day or two later he went with his wife to the

Abbey that he might pray for the return of health by the shrine of Edward the Confessor . . . that shrine which Henry III had raised. There he was kneeling when his last seizure descended and he fell back into the arms of his men. They carried him to a room in the Abbot's house, thinking he was dead, but to their surprise he rallied for a few moments and managed to ask where he was. They told him he was in what was known as the Jerusalem chamber.

A strange smile crossed his distorted features as he fell back on the pillow.

"Jerusalem . . . so the prophecy is fulfilled," he whispered. Only afterwards did they remember it had been foretold that he should die in Jerusalem.

A little while longer his senses remained clear, they sent for the Prince of Wales, and, as he knelt by the couch, the dying King commended Queen Joanna to his care.

"Henry appointed his mother-in-law (stepmother), Joanna of Navarre, a woman of great prudence and judgment in national affairs, to be Regent in his absence in France, with the advice of the privy council," a contemporary chronicle tells us, which shows that after his accession to the throne, Henry V treated his stepmother with great consideration.

What made him change his opinions is doubtful. Historians give little explanation, yet I think, reading between the lines, we see a woman's heart overrule a woman's head and a mother's love bring complications.

Henry had gone to France at the head of his army, and soon came tidings that the Duke of Bretagne and his brothers, Joanna's sons, now grown up, were fighting for the French King. Agincourt was fought and amongst the prisoners taken by the English was young Arthur of Bretagne, Joanna's second son, who was most sorely wounded.

If ever a mother hid torment in her heart, it was

Queen Joanna in the days when the nation rejoiced. In all the churches Te Deum was sung and a solemn procession walked from St. Paul's to Westminster Abbey to give public thanks to Almighty God for the victory. In that procession the Queen Mother walked in her robes of State; yet on the field of Agincourt her eldest brother was lying dead, so too was the husband of her eldest daughter, while her own son was a wounded prisoner. Also the position of her eldest son was uncertain, he had wavered, unable to decide on which side to fight, thus offending both Kings, either of whom was ready to dispossess him of his land and titles.

The position of young Arthur was more desperate still. Soon after Joanna's second marriage the boy, still a young child, had visited her in England, and her husband had bestowed on him the title of Duke of Richmond. That made him an English baron, and in taking up arms against Henry he was guilty of High Treason, and Henry, brave soldier and in some ways gallant gentleman, had a streak of vindictiveness that made forgiveness difficult.

When Henry returned to England he brought many captives in his train, young Arthur amongst them, and there is a suggestion the lad would have been executed off-hand if in the past Joanna had not lent large sums of money to her stepson and now offered to forgive him the debt on condition her child's life was spared. Reluctantly Henry consented but would not agree to anything beyond, insisting Arthur should remain in close confinement.

The boy was in the Tower, suffering bitterly, when, in Henry's absence, Joanna determined on seeing him again. She took up her residence in the State apartments—probably those rooms in which Isabella and Mortimer had met—and again a Queen of England ordered a prisoner to be brought from his dungeon into her presence, though there all likeness between the two scenes must end.

Joanna risked much in bringing about that

meeting. As she waited for the warders to lead the lad to her she was torn by anxiety how they would meet . . . whether he would remember her . . . if that inborn instinct which is supposed, romantically, to bind long-parted parents and children would make itself felt. On a sudden impulse she ordered one of her ladies to play the part of Queen. "Sit in my chair of State," she said. "I will stand behind it. When you have greeted my son, if he does not detect the deception, bid him pay his compliments to your ladies . . . so he will come to me . . ."

Thus standing behind the chair of the sham queen, she waited with her straining eyes on the door by which the prisoner would enter.

He came at long last, warders guarding him, a pale lad in his early teens, weak from his wounds and imprisonment. Naturally he knelt before the lady in the chair of State and wondered at the coldness of his reception. She played her part, conscious of the emotion of the woman who watched in the background, and at last bade him rise, to speak to her ladies. Obediently he did so and came to the watching woman.

She too wanted to play a part, but as he came so near, her courage failed.

"My son . . . my son . . . do you not know your mother?" she whispered, and broke down into tears as he woke to the truth and she had him in her arms again.

The interview was tragically short. When he left her she gave him a thousand nobles, which he generously shared with his fellow-prisoners; if the charge of meanness and love of money which has been brought against the Queen was justified, plainly this young son had not inherited it.

They were not allowed to meet again. Henry was furious when he heard what had happened and had the boy taken to Fotheringay, where he was kept in still more rigorous imprisonment. Not all Joanna's

prayers, nor her offers of ransom, could make the King relent.

It was the beginning of the rift between him and the Queen Mother.

Rather more than a year later (1419) Joanna was at her Palace at Havering-atte-Bower, part of her dowry as Queen Consort of England. It was a lovely spot, remote and solitary, set in the heart of deep woodlands where the songs of the nightingales were so persistent in the time of Edward the Confessor, who built the first palace there, that he declared they interrupted his prayers. His palace was more or less of a ruin in the days of Queen Joanna, but near it a new house had been built and this was the retreat she loved best.

She was there when the blow fell.

Horsemen came thundering at the palace gates. When they had been admitted and were brought to the presence of the Queen Mother they told her she must consider herself under arrest.

"What have I done? What is the charge against me?" Joanna asked, with quiet dignity, while her ladies were sobbing around her in terror of the fate that well might await her.

The charge was witchcraft. One John Ranolf, a friar who had been her confessor, had been arrested in France on a charge of practising sorcery, and, probably as a way of escaping torture, had "confessed" the Queen Mother had been guilty of practising some unspeakably evil rite of Black Magic to bring about the death of King Henry, and probably, release her captive son, poor soul. What the rite was, how she had hoped to bring about the King's death, or if there was any truth in the story, we do not know, but it would seem rumours of her secret practices had been whispered before and that it was commonly said she was trying to kill her stepson with the aid of "two domestic

sorcerers, Roger Colles of Salisbury, and Petronel Brocard."

Desperate as she was over the fate of that lad in Fotheringay, she may have "practised magic arts against the King," but also it must be remembered she was a woman of great learning and many interests, and that, roughly, a hundred and fifty years before Roger Bacon had come to his great scientific discoveries which he dared not make public lest he should be condemned for his magic. He had discovered the secret of gunpowder, he knew the force of steam, and foretold to his intimates that the day would come when ships would move without oars or sails, he came to an understanding of the true position of the sun and the other heavenly bodies. All this was unknown so far as the world at large was concerned, but traditions of his teachings lingered in many a monkish cell, and here and there fragments of his writings were treasured by other seekers after knowledge. Is it too much to suggest that Joanna, anxious to find some interest that would teach her to forget her care for her son, dabbled in some form of scientific research which seemed magic to the ignorant people? That she was the daughter of the secret poisoner, the wizard king, was remembered against her.

Whatever the truth, they took her away from the woodland home she loved, to water-washed Leeds, where her maids and ladies-in-waiting were taken from her and she was robbed of all the money and lands she had gained. She was not brought to trial openly, but the Parliamentary rolls tell how she was accused of "imagining and encompassing the death and destruction of our lord the King in the most high and horrible manner that could be devised." And the charge was considered sufficient to justify her punishment, though no special effort was made to sift the truth from the falsehood of the statements. Probably Henry, impoverished by the wars with

France, was anxious to get her large fortune under his own control.

Ranolf died in France . . . strangled by a friar who killed him in the midst of a debate. . . . Strickland suggests the subject of controversy was the guilt or innocence of Joanna. With his death actual proof of her crime was lost. "He was the only witness against her and by his death the whole affair remains the most inscrutable of historical mysteries."

She was not allowed to remain in Leeds Castle for long. The place was part of the dower bestowed on each Queen Consort, therefore it was her own, and though she was deprived of her attendants, and her fortune had been confiscated, she must have had a good deal of comfort, if not actual luxury. That did not please the King, so by his orders she was taken to Pevensey, then a lonely, frowning fortress on the seashore with haunted marshes surrounding it on three sides . . . scene of one of the most ghastly sieges in history . . . a place that men shunned after dark because it was reported that the shrieks of the women who had died horribly in that doomed city a thousand years before were to be heard still. And fragments of the Roman walls of that city are incorporated with the castle and its outbuildings. There is no wonder the place had an evil name.

For three years Joanna was shut up in that gloomy castle, living in close confinement, eating poor food, her own clothes taken from her so that she was compelled to wear the coarse garments of a penitent, she, who was still a queen and who protested her innocence even when she wore the clothes that were meant to show her shame.

Liberation came dramatically, suddenly. . . .

Henry V, still a young man, he was only thirty-five, was seized with a sudden illness while in France and knew death was near. In literally his last moments he repented his injustice to his stepmother, executing a document (signed on June 13th in the

tenth year of his reign) withdrawing all charges against her, and making "a full restitution of her dower," the latter a difficult clause to fulfil since he had given Joanna's fortune away in many directions, enriching his young wife with a large part, and spending much more beyond recovery. Plainly he was ashamed of what he had done and tried to make restitution, for the document ends: "We will and charge you that her beds and all things movable which we had of her be delivered to her again. And she shall have of such cloth and of such colour as she will devise herself, five or seven gowns such as she used to wear. And because we suppose she will soon remove from the place where she now is, you ordain her horses for eleven chares (cars or chariots) and let her remove them into whatsoever place within our realm that she list and when her list."

Thus reinstated to her former freedom and magnificence, Joanna went first to Leeds Castle, scene of her first imprisonment and afterwards to her beloved Havering. There she lived for many years, having happiness in the companionship of two boys, both of whom were dear to her. The one was her grandson, son and heir of her own first-born son, the Duke of Bretagne, and the other was the boy King Henry VI of England, grandson of the husband she had loved.

As Queen Mother her influence was exerted chiefly over that boy—his father, Henry V, had been too antagonistic for her to do anything with him one way or the other, but the present King was very different. A gentle, shrinking, tender-hearted lad he had no place in the hard, rough world where he was expected to be a leader. If he could have retired to a monastery with books and music as his companions he might have lived in history as a great scholar, a man whose vast learning brought light to thousands. Instead he was expected to excel in feats of arms, and when he shrank from such contests his guardians—with the best intentions in the world—tried to "harden him" by forcing him



Photo

PEVENSEY CASTLE

Once the prison of Queen Joanna of Navarre.

Father Theodore

to see blood spilt at which he sickened, or to watch human or animal suffering which brought tears to his eyes, on which they beat him unmercifully for his soul's good. Books were forbidden him for the most part, he had to read by stealth and again was beaten if his poor secret was discovered. The effect on a lad so highly strung and sensitive was a foregone conclusion. That brilliant intellect became clouded, such strength of character as he had ever possessed was destroyed. He became a weakling, sobbing at the least threat, shrinking from a passing shadow.

Few lives have been shadowed by a greater tragedy than his, and viewing it in the perspective of time, it emerges that the only real happiness that lonely, shattered lad knew, came to him at Havering, under the care of Joanna, the Queen Mother. Her own culture and education made her appreciate his love of learning, the books which were denied him elsewhere were at his hand in that house amid the woods. His playmate, the little boy from Bretagne, shared his interests. At times even poor Henry indulged in sports.

The Queen Mother was not an ideal character by any means if we believe all we are told of her love of money, but at least she deserves gratitude and honour of her care of that lonely lad. To him she was a Queen Mother indeed, his own mother hardly seeming interested in him.

Joanna died at Havering in 1437, when Henry was about fifteen, and with her went the one affectionate and kindly influence from his most shadowed life.

VIII

KATHERINE OF VALOIS

THE QUEEN WHO WAS RAGGED AND HUNGRY

ALL the chroniclers of her own time are eloquent of the beauty of Katherine of Valois, and it would seem that the King she was to marry really fell in love with her good looks. Her mother used them as a stock-in-trade, the girl was taught they were an asset of which she must make the most. Yet according to our ideas she was almost plain, unless Rous, who drew her portrait when he attended her marriage in company with the Earl of Warwick, greatly exaggerated the length of her nose which in his painting seems out of proportion to the other features.

Perhaps a nose of extraordinary length was considered beautiful in the fifteenth century, in which case we may conclude that Katherine was very beautiful indeed.

Imagine little children, one a girl only three years of age, crying from sheer hunger in the gilded rooms of a French palace. Their clothes were in rags, their hair was in a dreadful condition of filth—such were the children of Charles VI, King of France, and his wife, Isabeau of Bavaria, one of the worst of women.

The King was mad, therein lay the tragedy of those young lives. It was said that his madness began as he rode to the chase one blazing August day, which suggests he had “a touch of the sun.”

Certainly it was then he broke into the violence of delirium, but before that his reign had been marked by so many forms of extravagance there seems little doubt his brain had been affected for a long time. When this violence began they shut him up in the palace of St. Pol, always his favourite home, and there his Queen sent their children so that they might be out of her way while she lived her own life of vice and debauchery elsewhere.

The question of eugenics had not been raised, and though Charles was an acknowledged madman in 1392, children continued to be born to him and his Queen during the following years. That particularly dirty little girl who had been named Katherine was born in 1401, and things were at their very worst in the St. Pol palace at the time she reached the age of three.

Queen Isabeau, spending recklessly all the money on which she could lay her hands, allowed nothing for the upkeep of the palace where her demented husband and her neglected children were. The upper servants helped themselves to such valuables as were at hand and decamped, only the poorer members of the staff remained, and we may conclude there were very few of them. Such as they were, they scraped together what poor food as they could get, and shared it with the children and the King.

It was amongst such conditions that a lucid interval came to Charles. He woke as if from a heavy sleep, his brain still clouded. Wonderingly he looked round the room in which he was, he saw the tarnished decorations, the ragged tapestry, the traces of neglect and decay everywhere, and called a servant to bring him wine. He wanted to drink in the hope that returning bodily strength might give clearness of mind.

There was no wine in the place. The servant, himself ragged and hungry, could bring only water, but he served it in a golden goblet, part of the treasure which the palace had held in other days. The

King drank and wondered. Still holding the goblet he walked from room to room, till he came to that in which little Katherine was crawling over the dirty rushes on the floor, sobbing the while, scratching her little head, the tears making white tracks down her grubby little face.

"What child is that?" the King asked as she scrambled to her feet, afraid at the sight of the man who was so strange looking and wild. Though she had lived all her young life in the same palace as her father they had never met before. He had been kept in a remote wing far from his children, which, remembering his outbreaks of violence, may have been for their safety.

From some shadowy corner a woman appeared. She is described as being the governess to the little Princess, but more probably she was a nurse. Whatever she may have been, she had remained loyal to her charges.

"They are your children, sire," she said. Probably she noted the improvement in his state, for she went on to explain: "The Princess is weeping because she is hungry and dirty . . . her clothes have not been changed for weeks . . . even her linen is dirty and she has no other. If she had food . . ."

The King burst into tears. "My children are hungry while I drink out of a gold cup," he said, looking at the goblet he held. "Yet even so the fault is not mine for I am poorly clothed also and have little food. But I must not think of myself. Take this goblet—you can sell it and with the money will buy the food we need so badly."

What the governess did we are not told. We can only wonder why that particular gold cup had not been sold before, but from that moment of awakening the King's reason may be said to have returned. At least he was able to take his place in the world though his brain was never strong and he had frequent relapses.

The next thing to happen was the arrival of Queen

Isabeau at St. Pol. She had heard of her husband's recovery, and had come to assure herself the rumour was true—it was the last thing she wanted. In panic at what the result of his discovery of her way of life might be, she fled with one of her lovers, Louis of Orleans, taking her children with her, probably as some form of hostage. Fortunately for them they were not left in her care for long; soon she was imprisoned at Tours on account of the scandal raised by her conduct, and little Katherine was sent to a convent at Poissy with her sister Marie who afterwards took the veil.

During the years she spent in the convent, Katherine was trained in all the accomplishments of a lady of her time, and doubtless the good nuns tried hard to inculcate all their own virtues, while she had the example of her saintly sister before her. But Katherine was a difficult pupil, the child of much misgivings and many tears. That strain of madness which was her father's curse was in her blood, also at times she was under the influence of her mother. Beyond all this, was the memory of those early days of poverty and want—a memory which made the girl, even as a child, vow she would win wealth and fame and power, and use them to the full.

She was fourteen when the Pursuivant of Arms to Henry V of England arrived in France, demanding—not asking—her in marriage together with possession of certain provinces, the request ending with the threat that if his demands were not complied with immediately, he would take what he wanted by force. King Charles had a very lucid interval at that time, for he replied with dignity that "if that was in his mind he would do his best to receive him, but as to the marriage, it seemed a strange way of wooing the Princess Katherine, to come to her covered with the blood of her countrymen."

Katherine's elder brother was not so dignified nor so diplomatic. He sent Henry a cask of tennis balls

with the message that according to his way of life they were fitter playthings for him than the provinces he demanded. A gibe at Henry's sowing of wild oats in the days before he came to the throne. Because of the truth it contained, the insult went the deeper, and, with a pun, Henry retorted, "These balls shall be struck back with such a racket as shall force the gates of Paris open."

The campaign which followed was short but decisive for the English. Henry landed at Harfleur which he took by storm, then pressed on, fighting every step of the way, his ranks thinned by disease and the men suffering from bitter weather. Yet at Agincourt he completed his victory and returned home with a crowd of prisoners of war, leaving half the chivalry of France dead on the field.

The English victory plunged France into panic and in the midst of the dismay the two elder sons of the King died suddenly. It was said grief at the state of his country caused the death of the dauphin, which seems unlikely from all that is known of him, and ugly rumours spread that both the lads had been poisoned by their mother whose secrets they had discovered. The added shocks were too much for the King whose madness came on again.

While her country was drenched in the blood of her defenders, Katherine made up her mind that she would marry Henry only to receive another blow. Apparently he had put all thought of her out of his mind, and was contemplating marriage with a princess of Aragon; already his ambassadors were on their way to the Spanish Court.

With the King under restraint and her two sons both dead, Queen Isabeau escaped from Tours and Katherine joined her. Mother and daughter laid their matrimonial plans. Katherine meant to marry Henry as a means of escape from her stricken country, while the Queen was anxious for the marriage as a way of obtaining more money for her

own needs. So long as she had been a child the Queen had had no interest in her youngest daughter, but now she saw her as an asset, and the two came very near each other in thought. Strickland says Queen Isabeau obtained "enormous influence over the girl," but it is more probable Katherine allowed herself to be advised by her mother exactly so far as that advice followed her own inclinations.

The English King was back in France laying siege to Rouen—a ghastly siege whose full story is too terrible to tell. Sixty thousand human beings were shut up in the town which Henry surrounded, and there introduced trench warfare since he dug trenches by which his men could pass from one point to another without being exposed to the arrows of the defenders. At intervals all about the city he erected gallows on which he hanged the prisoners of war who fell into his hands, leaving their bodies dangling in the sight of their friends. Famine set in in the beleaguered city ; horses, cats, dogs, rats, became food for which the starving creatures fought. More terrible still was the decision at which the defenders came—that all who could not bear arms, the old men, the women, the little children, were to be expelled from the town and driven forth to be at the mercy of the English. And the English waited with drawn swords, ready to deal death. Many died thus, begging only they might be allowed to wander forth in their misery ; but others chose to stay on the no-man's-land between the city walls and the enemy trenches, and there they remained all through the winter, with no shelter, with no fire, and no food except the rank weeds and grass. Small wonder that they died in multitudes and even decent burial was denied.

In the midst of this horror, a messenger arrived for King Henry from Queen Isabeau. The man brought a portrait of the Princess Katherine, and Henry, looking at that picture a long time, was deeply impressed. He acknowledged she was " pass-

ing fair" but refused to decrease his demands. He would rather marry Katherine than the Aragon princess, he said in effect, but he wanted money and land with her as well.

That reply was a bitter disappointment to mother and daughter, but as the portrait had failed they determined to see what a personal meeting would do. The Queen arranged a truce, and that the poor King, who was quite demented, should attend a special camp to which Henry should be invited to discuss terms. All came off as was planned, some of his ministers speaking for the King, the Queen and Princess attending in their robes of state. We are told by Monstrelet who was present, that Katherine "was very handsome with engaging manners, and it was plainly seen King Henry was desperately in love with her."

So he may have been, but he insisted on her large dowry still, and the war went on for two more tragic years.

At the end of that time France was prostrate at the feet of a conqueror, and again Queen Isabeau approached him on the subject of the marriage. He sent word back that he wanted Katherine, but would have her only if she brought him all France as her dowry, and so desperate was the country that the Queen actually agreed. If Henry would marry Katherine, she said, when King Charles died the English King should succeed to the French throne.

Probably Henry was war weary as were his men, and thus he agreed to the rather queer arrangement. He and Katherine met again in the cathedral of Notre Dame where they were formally betrothed, and he put on her finger a very magnificent ring, believed to be that given at their coronation to the Queen's Consort of England. Their marriage followed almost directly afterwards, and then, because the people of France would not tamely submit to the giving away of their country, the war broke out again.

To quote Strickland: "The honeymoon of



KATHERINE OF VALOIS

From a drawing by John Rous, who attended her marriage in the train
of the Earl of Warwick.

Katherine the Fair was passed at sieges and leaguers ; her bridal music was the groans of France. Horror, unutterable horror, was attendant on these nuptials. Yet Katherine was no unwilling bride, for as her brother-in-law, Philip the Good of Burgundy, expressly declared, 'She had passionately longed to be espoused to King Henry, and had constantly solicited her mother, with whom she could do anything, till her marriage took place.' Not a word, not a sign of objection to the cruelties and slaughter that followed her marriage is recorded ; nor did the Royal beauty intercede for her wretched country with her newly wedded lord."

A terrible indictment to bring against a woman, especially one who was so young as Katherine and who had just achieved her desire.

"Wherever the child shall be born it must not be at Windsor."

Henry had brought his girl Queen to England that she might be crowned, a ceremony attended with very great pomp and much rejoicing, and as Katherine was expecting the birth of her child, Henry decided to remain with her until after the event. News was brought that his brother, Thomas, Duke of Clarence, to whom he was deeply attached, had been killed in France, and at once he altered his plans. He must return to that stricken country and avenge his brother's death. Thus he bade a reluctant farewell to his young wife, and at their parting tried more to impress upon her his wish concerning Windsor.

Katherine was inclined to sulk. She pointed out that Windsor was the most important of his castles, that it was there his great ancestor Edward I was born. As Edward of Windsor he had gone down to history, a great soldier, and an all-conquering king. Why should not her child be known as Henry

of Windsor, she insisted, then his destiny might be as brilliant as that of his ancestor.

Henry would have none of it. Amongst his many studies Astrology must be counted, and it appeared he had been consulting the planets concerning his unborn heir. How he arrived at the calculation we do not know, but he was convinced ill luck would be brooding over Windsor in December, when the child was to be born.

He went away, trusting his wife would obey his wish, but directly after his departure Katherine went to Windsor and it was there, on December 6th, 1421, that the ill-fated Henry VI was born.

Little Henry of Windsor was six months old when his mother left him to join her husband in France, travelling with reinforcements of twenty thousand men intended to complete the conquest of her country. The French did not receive her rapturously, as might have been expected, but they wondered at the splendour of her clothes and jewels—the dowry Henry had demanded with her had never been paid, but he had overlooked that, and had lavished on her a great part of the fortune of Queen Joanna of Navarre, then in her prison at Pevensey.

Katherine, joined by her mother, travelled to Vincennes where Henry joined her—a dying man. Some “mortal disease” had struck him down in the midst of battle, and he died after executing the document that restored Queen Joanna to liberty, and making a will in which he left Katherine a gold sceptre. He never saw his little son, and apparently forgave her wilfulness in disobeying him as to the place of the child’s birth.

In magnificent procession the dead King was carried through France, and after the landing at Dover the funeral became more splendidly imposing still. The people were impressed by the pageantry

of it all, and decided Katherine, Queen Mother already though not yet twenty-one, must have been a most devoted wife. With fifteen bishops and as many abbots in their robes, all singing as they walked, they carried the King on the last stage from Blackheath to Westminster where they laid him to rest.

Evidently the Queen Mother had an eye to pageantry and was fond of appearing in processions, for the next thing we hear of her is that she removed to London and rode from Westminster to the Tower "on a moving throne drawn by white horses, and surrounded by all the princes and nobles of England." The likeness to the wagons which appear in our Lord Mayors' shows has to be remembered.

On that "moving throne," the girl mother sat in state, with her ten-months-old orphan baby in her arms, and the tiny King, we are told, behaved with extraordinary gravity. In the *Chronicles of London* (1423) there are several accounts of him and his Queen Mother. "Those pretty hands which could not yet feed himself were made capable of holding a sceptre and he, who was beholden to his nurses for milk, did distribute the sustenance of Law and Order to the nation." Poor little child !

A later entry, when the King was nearly two years old, runs : "This year upon Saturday, November 13th, the King removed from Windsor to hold a Parliament in London. At night the King and his mother the Queen lodged at Stains [sic], and upon the morrow, the King being borne towards his mother's car, he skreeked [sic], he cried, he sprang, and would be carried no further. Wherefore they carried him again to the inn where he abode the Sunday all day. On the morrow he was borne to his mother's car, he being then glad and merry of cheer, and so they came to Kingston and rested all night. On the Tuesday the Queen brought him to Kennington Palace. On the Wednesday he came to London and with glad semblance and merry cheer

on his mother's lap, rode through London to Westminster and on the morrow was so brought to Parliament."

He was four years old when his mother carried him "in a chair of state" to the West door of St. Paul's, when the Duke of Gloucester lifted the little lad from his mother's lap to set him on his feet, then led him at the head of a great procession of nobles to the High Altar where he knelt for a long time on a specially prepared cushion. He was supposed to be praying for the nation, and we are told he looked "very gravely about him."

The service over they took the baby out of the cathedral to mount him on "a fair courser," and so on horseback led him through the City to Kennington Palace where he stayed the night, and the next day went to Westminster to "open Parliament," sitting in the House of Lords on the knee of his mother.

Practically that was the last public act of the Queen Mother when she sat on the throne in the House of Lords with the baby King on her knee. Already ugly rumours were afloat concerning her. Under their breaths people asked the reason for her mysterious disappearance from Court circles, for the abandonment of her child for months at a time. When he was seven, little Henry was given absolutely to the care of Warwick, first signing a document in which he authorised the Earl to "teach us good manners, literature and languages, and to chastise us from time to time according to his discretion." As has been said already, Warwick took full advantage of the permission given in the last words. The next years of that shadowed life contain the tragedy of a misunderstood child, and efforts made to "harden him" which resulted in breaking his spirit and clouding his intellect. His only happiness was when he was allowed to visit Havering-atte-Bower where Queen Joanna played the part of Queen Mother to the forlorn little boy.

The story of his own mother is wrapped in mystery

for thirteen years. Probably all that time the Court historians were occupied in hushing up the story of her life.

What is certain is that very, very early in her widowhood Katherine noticed a young and handsome man who had returned in her train from France, having been one of the bodyguard of Henry V, and probably was with him when he died. Tradition says this soldier of fortune, Owen Tudor, had fought as a private at Agincourt where he distinguished himself by such outstanding bravery that Henry gave him the title of "armiger," the men who had the duty of guarding the King and are believed to have been the origin of the more modern gentleman-at-arms.

Having stood high in the favour of the late King it followed that Tudor was given the honour of attending the baby Henry also, and thus had many opportunities of meeting the Queen Mother, who was widowed before she was twenty and had not had an upbringing which would encourage her towards virtue. She could hardly have been her mother's daughter if she had been anything but what she was.

Stowe is the authority for saying that some of the ladies in high position at Court, ventured to remonstrate with the Queen on her infatuation, pointing out "how greatly the Queen Mother lowered herself by paying any attention to a person who, though possessing some personal advantages, had no princely or even gentle alliances, but belonged to a clan of savages reckoned inferior to the lowest British yeoman."

With a good deal of spirit Katherine retorted by telling the ladies to mind their own business, and as soon as possible had another secret interview with the man who was her lover already. To him she repeated what had been said, but Tudor rose to the occasion.

The ladies did not know what they were talking about, he said. His father was a direct descendant

from Prince Theodore who had ruled North Wales in the long ago, and though the family had fallen in its fortunes—it is believed his father was a brewer at Beaumaris—the Royal blood was pure in the veins of all its members and only the rapine of the English royalties had brought about the change. Apparently Katherine did not quite believe him, plausible though he was, on which he offered to bring some of his princely relatives to Windsor that she might assure herself of their nobility.

To this she agreed. "Whereupon he brought into her presence John ap Meredith and Howel ap Llewellyn, his near cousins, men of goodliest stature and personage, but wholly destitute of bringing up and education. When the Queen Mother spoke to them in various languages, they were not able to answer her, on which she said 'They were the goodliest dumb creatures she ever saw.'" Sir John Wynne, a contemporary, gives that story.

The "goodliest stature and personage" of the two soldiers plainly impressed her, or perhaps she was so much in love with Tudor she overlooked the shortcomings of his ancestry. A priest performed a marriage ceremony at which only one servant was witness, and thus the Queen Mother became the wife of one of the men-at-arms. It must be added there is a great deal of doubt if that wedding ever took place, though as the accession of Henry VII and the royalty of the House of Tudor depended upon it, naturally Katherine's descendants insisted on its legality.

In her own time scandal grew greater. The child King was crowned in Westminster when eight years old, but his mother was not present. A year later he was taken to Paris that his coronation might be repeated there, and again she did not accompany him nor was he allowed to see his grandmother, Queen Isabeau, whose life continued to be a flagrant scandal.

The years which followed brought disaster to

England. With a child King various factions warred with each other, and the France which Henry V had conquered amid so much horror, slipped from the English hold. Katherine was still supposed to be the Royal widow, but during those periods when she had retired from Court, at least three children had been born to her. The third son, these were all boys, came into the world at Westminster Palace, apparently arriving unexpectedly at a time when the Queen Mother was forced to appear before some tribunal of Parliament. He is believed to have been smuggled out of the place with great secrecy and taken to a monastery where he spent his whole life. When he reached manhood he became a monk.

In 1436, fourteen years after her widowhood, the scandal of her secret marriage, if marriage it were, was brought to light. Humphrey of Gloucester, the Protector of England, rushed a bill through Parliament threatening appalling punishments on "anyone who should dare to marry the Queen Mother without the consent of the King and his Council," though it was well known she was Owen Tudor's wife already. Other discoveries followed. The Queen Mother was sent to Bermondsey Abbey practically a prisoner, while Tudor with his priest and servant—probably those who had been present at the marriage—were committed to Newgate.

In Bermondsey Abbey Queen Katherine died, soon after giving birth to a little daughter who lived only a few days. During the weeks of life remaining to her the Queen Mother does not seem to have troubled about her other children, nor of her husband. She was concerned chiefly with the paying of her debts, not from any sense of justice, but because she was convinced her soul could not be saved unless all her creditors were satisfied.

The good nuns who attended her to the last were sure she was truly penitent, so we may hope she was. At least she was concerned about the tragic fate she saw waiting her kingly son, and seems to have been

convinced all the troubles of his reign and of the cruel fate destined to be his, had been brought about solely by her wilfulness in insisting he should be born at Windsor. She said Henry V had cast the horoscope truly, and their child must suffer all his life through for the shadow which had rested on his birthplace.

ELIZABETH WOODVILLE

THE QUEEN WITH THE GOLDEN HAIR

EDWARD IV, not long come to the throne after the horrors of Civil War had laid the land waste, found time to go hunting in the forest of Whittlebury, not far from Northampton. The hunting was over, the King was on his homeward way with hounds at his horse's heels, and hawk upon his wrist, when, as he approached a great oak, he saw a woman standing by the wayside, holding two little boys by the hand. As she was young and very fair, the King having an eye for beauty, watched her with interest as he approached. Soon he was close, when she moved from the shelter of the tree and, still clinging to her little children, knelt in his path.

"Justice, O King," she cried. "Justice for my orphan sons."

He reined in at once, and asked what she wished him to do, at which she wept softly while telling him of her sorrow. She was still very young, yet already a widow, her husband, Sir John Grey, having fallen for the sake of the Red Rose in the late wars. His estates had been forfeited, she and her children, the elder not four years old, were destitute and she was living at her mother's home, Grafton Castle, in the character of a poor relation. Now that the White Rose was all-triumphant, would not the King be generous to his fallen foe and restore the lands of Bradgate to her children.

What reply Edward made at that first meeting we do not know, but certainly he set her fears at rest and she returned to Grafton full of hope that the injustice to her children was nearly at an end. Traditionally she and the King met under that tree in the forest's heart many times—four hundred years later when it was only a hollow trunk by the wayside, it was called The Queen's Oak still—and there what has been described as the most romantic wooing which gave any English King a lovely wife, was carried on. He told Elizabeth Grey of his love for her, he swore that her children should be as dear to him as her own, but as for marriage. . . . He could not marry her, he confessed, since he was formally betrothed already. As a matter of fact he was betrothed two deep, in childhood having been pledged to Lady Eleanor Butler, a descendant of the great Earl of Shrewsbury, and later, by his own ardent wish apparently, to Elizabeth Lucy.

Elizabeth would not have been the clinging, affectionate woman she was if she could have remained untouched by her Royal lover's devotion. Six feet two in height, splendidly proportioned as we know Edward was, tradition insists on the handsomeness of his features and the charm of his manner, and in this romantic wooing he was very earnest indeed. Strickland suggests that Elizabeth's heart was aching from the loss of her first husband to whom she was tenderly attached, and this may have been the case. Yet she was young and the King was deeply in love, while the more she hesitated the more ardent he became, as might have been expected. All his other love affairs—and their name was legion—were remarkably easy.

When he spoke of the impossibility of their marriage, however, her reply became more definite.

"My liege, I know I am not good enough to be your Queen," she said, "but I am too good to be your mistress."

That reply completed the subjugation of the King.

He retorted that his wife she must be ; he overruled all her arguments, though he insisted that the marriage must be kept secret for a time, partly because of his other matrimonial entanglements, but chiefly because he, who feared no man alive, was in mortal terror of his mother, Cicely, Duchess of York. Since he had become King, the Duchess had assumed the state of a Queen, and when at Fotheringay, her chief home, she had a magnificent throne room in which she sat in state. Proud Cis was her nickname amongst the country people, and in her pride she was not likely to give up her position as the first lady of the land to a woman who had no Royal blood in her veins.

Elizabeth agreed to that secret marriage, or perhaps her mother, the Duchess of Bedford, overruled any reluctance she might have had, and so it came about that Fabyan, a secretary to the Duke of Norfolk, has left us this account of the secret ceremony, adding that he had many of the details from the King's own lips.

"In most secret manner, upon May 1st, 1464, King Edward espoused Elizabeth, late being the wife of Sir John Grey. Which spousailles were solemnised early in the morning at the town called Grafton, near to Stoney Stratford. At which none were present but the spouse (bridegroom) and the spousesse (bride), her mother, the priest, two gentlewomen and a young man who helped the priest to sing." Fabyan adds that the King told him he had long loved Elizabeth and had married her because she was the most virtuous woman he had ever met. He might have added "the only virtuous woman," virtue being very rare at his Court. His mother, proud Cis, had set an example which was not elevating, and many believed there was truth in the nickname "Son of an Archer" which Louis XI of France bestowed on the English King.

Directly after the ceremony Edward rode away as if hunting, but four days later he was at Grafton and told his host, his wife's father, that he had come to

stay for a time. Stay he did, the marriage still being unannounced, and he and Elizabeth meeting only in secret.

By the time autumn came, that secret had to be divulged since a child, who might be heir to the throne, was to be born. With all his many faults, Edward's love for his wife and his wish to do her honour never altered and he rose to the occasion now. He had her brought to the ancient palace at Reading where a council of the peers had been convoked, and when he entered the Council Chamber, he had her by his side.

Leading her by the hand to the chairs of state, he presented her to his nobles as his wife.

Probably some suspicion of what was afoot had been broadcast, yet the announcement came as a bombshell, but Edward was resolute, and the situation was accepted with outward rejoicing. In the British Museum is an illuminated MS. with exquisitely wrought paintings showing how Elizabeth went to Reading Abbey to kneel before the altar with the King and be solemnly recognised as his wife by both Church and State. It should not be called a marriage service as she had been his wife for four months, but as a marriage the ceremony is described generally. The illumination just mentioned shows her entering the Abbey through the archway which remains, wearing a dress of gold, with an ermine train, by her side a youth escorting her, believed to have been Edward's brother Clarence. Her pale golden hair is shown loose over her shoulders, streaming to her knees, which is in keeping with every description of her which has come to us. All who wrote of her mentioned the beauty of that golden hair and the profusion with which it fell about her as a mantle.

Not only were many of the nobles furious at the marriage, and Proud Cis refused to acknowledge

the Queen as her daughter, but in other countries offence was given also. Apparently some effort had been made to bring about a marriage between Edward and Isabel of Castile, Queen of Spain, since the Spanish ambassador, Granfidius de Sasiola, wrote a letter in which he said : " The Queen of Castile was turned in her heart from England in time past, for the unkindness she took of the King of England, Edward IV, whom God pardon, for his refusing her and taking to wife a widow woman of England."

Rather unexpectedly, the marriage which had been celebrated under so many difficulties, was a very happy one. That Edward was a faithful husband could not be said. He had had many affairs before marriage and had as many afterwards, amongst them the one with Jane Shore, but he remained deeply attached to his wife. In a thousand ways his care for her is shown, and throughout the years of their married life she had the greatest influence over him. Strickland is not kind in her opinion of the Queen's character. " Over his mind Elizabeth, from first to last, held potent sway—an influence most dangerous in the hands of a woman who possessed more cunning than firmness, more skill in conducting diplomatic intrigue than power to form a rational plan. She was ever successful in carrying out her own purposes, but she seldom had a wise end in view. The advancement of her own relatives and the depreciation of her husband's friends were her chief objects. Elizabeth gained her way with her husband by the assumption of the deepest humility, her words were soft and caressing, her glances timid."

Against that view of her character many will protest. That her influence over her husband was dangerous because it was used for the good of her relatives is undoubted. At such a time a woman, a weak woman at that, should not have interfered in the affairs of State, but we have no proof that she ever conducted " diplomatic intrigue " by her own wish. She became involved in many plots because

rival factions appealed to her, knowing her power over the King, and very frequently she made mistakes by championing the wrong cause. She was devotedly attached to her brothers, her children and her husband, there is nothing to suggest that she was "cunning" nor that her humility was assumed. Rather she was the type of woman whose words would be soft and caressing, whose glances would be timid. Clinging, loving, weak, she was all wife and mother, totally out of place amid the whirlpool of conflicting currents amid which her life was cast.

Her first child was born five months after that recognition of her marriage at Reading, and to her great disappointment was a girl. Edward comforted her when he heard her views. The child's horoscope had been cast, he said, and had shown that this little baby girl who was to be named Elizabeth was destined one day to wear a brilliant crown. It is to be hoped the Queen was satisfied by that promise, at least it was one she remembered later when it spurred her on to strength and courage which she had lacked before.

Proud Cis, the Duchess of York, attended the christening of the little princess, and, outwardly at least, became reconciled to her daughter-in-law. In the years which followed King Henry remained a prisoner in the Tower, his wife and son were exiled in France, and comparative peace reigned in England. Two more children, both girls, were born to the Queen, of whom one was named Cecily, after the old Duchess, and the other Mary. Elizabeth's influence over the King remained as great as ever. Strong in all other respects he was as wax in her hands, and she used that power almost entirely for the benefit of her own people, particularly seeing to it that her brothers were advanced in rank and given the highest honours.

The other nobles grew restive as they watched the favouritism, an undercurrent of unrest made itself felt, and the threatened storm broke in full violence when the Queen managed that certain honours

which he had been promised to Warwick the King Maker, were distributed to her brothers instead. Warwick declared he would serve no King who was in the power of a foolish woman, and where Warwick went more than half the nobles would follow. With us, knowing modern conditions as we do, it is almost impossible to realise the power which had been placed in the hands of the King Maker—the title itself is eloquent and was deserved. Warwick had placed Edward upon the throne, and now was not alone the King's chief adviser in Parliament, but was a leading General in the Army and an Admiral of the Fleet. As politician, soldier and sailor his power was unlimited, and when the astounding news reached the King that Warwick was on his way to France to offer his great influence to Margaret of Anjou to set her son on the throne, there came also another blow in the shape of a rising in Yorkshire, led by a romantic adventurer called Robin of Redesdale, who, also, had declared for the Red Rose.

Edward, realising his danger, rallied his followers for a desperate stand, while the Queen, who was expecting her fourth child, was distracted by her fears for him and for her brothers. In their rise to power the latter had not troubled to win popularity from any class and Warwick was by no means the only one of the Barons to resent their advancement. Naturally much of this resentment re-acted on the Queen. Her influence over the King was realised and rumours were afloat that witchcraft had been at work. Not by the ordinary love of a woman for her husband could she hold Edward in so close a spell, men said in sinister whispers.

In hot haste, Edward took the Queen and her little daughters to the Tower for safety, then rode north with all the men he could gather to stem the tide of rebellion. During this absence of his from his Queen an effort was made to bring him to distrust her. A man named Thomas Wake appeared before the King with "the stock-in-trade of a necromancer,"

whatever that might have been, presumably a cauldron and broomstick and black cat, with perhaps a crystal and some form of chart.

"Why do you bring me these?" Edward asked, puzzled. He was an ardent believer in Astrology, so they had every reason to expect him to be impressed.

"My Lord King, I have found these in Grafton Castle," was the answer. "They are the property of the Queen's mother, the Duchess of Bedford. I have proof that the Duchess as well as her daughter have practised necromancy . . . it was by their evil spells that your majesty was induced to marry the widow who was not even well-born."

Of the fate of Thomas Wake we know nothing, but most certainly his plot failed. Edward was quite ready to believe in other people's witchcraft, but nothing could shake his trust in his wife, his perfect faith in her.

Other troubles came, his army was in revolt; once his own men planned to take him prisoner and he escaped, half dressed, from the camp to reach Lynn where a ship took him overseas to raise a fresh army there. Thus Elizabeth in the Tower was in desperate need. She heard Warwick was marching on London at the head of the Red Rose army, and knew their first objective would be the Tower to set King Henry free. Panic came upon her, and in the night, taking her frightened little girls, she entered her barge and was rowed up the river to Westminster where she dared not enter the palace but sought shelter in the Sanctuary, a massive and gloomy building at the end of St. Margaret's churchyard. It is believed to have been built by Edward the Confessor, and was of such strength that when it was pulled down by vandals in the eighteenth century, the workmen had a hard task to demolish its massive walls. Exactly the purpose for which it had been built seems doubtful, but in the fifteenth century it was what its name implies—a Sanctuary to which



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From a painting in Queen's College, Cambridge, which she founded.

flocked criminals who strove to escape the Law—debtors who could not pay their debts—together with the blind, the maimed, the sick or starving. Anyone so destitute they had no other shelter, or wanted to hide in some last extremity, found refuge here. The broad road, between the hospital and St. Margaret's, is called the *Sanctuary* still, and marks the actual site of that grim building where suffering and crime and hardship gathered.

The fugitive Queen and her children had to face poverty almost as great as that of those around her, but the hackneyed saying that the poor help the poor, was proved again. In the *Sanctuary* was a nurse or midwife, called Mother Cobb, who either attended the Queen in her confinement or acted as foster-mother to the little Prince who was born amid those sordid surroundings. Also Master Serigo, described as her physician, attended the Queen, apparently following her into the *Sanctuary*, and John Gould, a butcher, undertook to supply the Royal fugitives with meat. Thus, amid danger and hardship, the Prince, who became the ill-fated Edward V, was born, and within a week of his birth was smuggled into the adjoining abbey to be baptised “with no more ceremony than if he had been a poor man's son.”

It seemed as if the birth of the Prince had brought good fortune to the distressed Royal Family. Edward returned to England at the head of an army, London opened its gates to him, again he was acknowledged King, and at once hurried to the *Sanctuary* to give the good news to his wife and children. His delight in the birth of his son was unbounded, and it is pleasant to have to record that he rewarded magnificently those friends who had stood by them in their time of trouble. Mother Cobb was given a pension of twelve pounds a year, which must have made her rich for life; Dr. Serigo had a large money payment; John Gould was given certain rights in connection with tallow and leather which made him very flourishing indeed. The Abbot of Westminster who had

helped and comforted the Queen and had stood godfather to the Prince, was rewarded with a bishopric.

At once the Queen and the Royal children were removed from their uncomfortable quarters, and in connection with the Civil War events move rapidly. The Battle of Barnet gave Edward a crushing victory in which Warwick died, Tewkesbury followed with the brutal murder of young Prince Edward, son of Henry VI, and directly afterwards Henry, the gentle scholar who had been a prisoner in the Tower all this time, was found dead on the steps of the altar where he knelt in prayer each night. No one knew—or said they knew—how he had died, but it was reported he had been stabbed in the back as he knelt, and rumour declared the King's brother, Richard of Gloucester, had struck the blow with his own hand.

Unspeakably cruel as those two murders of the saintly Henry and his gallant young son were, according to the ethics of the times they were justified. Now that no other heir of the House of Lancaster remained to claim the throne, the Civil War ended and Edward of the White Rose seemed firmly established on his throne. For his wife a period of domestic happiness followed. Many accounts of the splendour of the Court have come down to us, especially one of the great doings at Westminster Palace, on St. Edward's Day, October 13th, 1472, when the King, wearing his full robes, on his head the Cap of Maintenance, took his seat in Parliament on which the Speaker, William Allington, read a long document in praise of the conduct of the Queen during His Majesty's absence abroad, dwelling on "her womanly behaviour and great constancy" and of their joy at the birth of the Prince. Afterwards the King and Queen walked in state to St. Edward's shrine where they made offerings, and in their train came the baby Prince "carried in the arms of his chamberlain, Master Vaughan."

The birth of that first son was followed four years later by that of a second boy, named Richard, who seems to have been a delicate little fellow from his birth and all the dearer to his mother in consequence.

That little boy, Richard who was made Duke of York, was not five years old when his father decided it was time he should marry, and chose as his bride little Lady Anne Mowbray, the three-year-old heiress of the Duchy of Norfolk. The Chapel of St. Stephen in Westminster Palace was hung with cloth of gold for the ceremony. The Queen led the little bridegroom to the altar, her brother escorted the baby bride and afterwards "all the company partook of a rich banquet in the painted chamber." It is a sidelight on the lives of Royal children in the fifteenth century.

The eldest daughter, Elizabeth, was betrothed to the Dauphin of France about the same time as her little brother was married, but the engagement was broken off later, and rumour went that Edward was so bitterly disappointed at what he considered the insult to his daughter, that he died of a broken heart. That is an exaggeration. Naturally he was angry, but the cause of his death was a fever, probably what we call influenza. He died at Westminster, April 9th, 1483, leaving the crown to the boy Prince who was thirteen years old.

The new King was at Ludlow Castle, but in view of his father's death it was necessary he should come to London, and here the weakness, not the craft, of Elizabeth's character was revealed.

As Queen Mother she presided over the first Council and suggested, very wisely as matters turned out, that a strong guard of militia should be sent to Ludlow to escort the young King to his capital. Lord Hastings argued against the proposal, declaring he would "retire from the Court if the young King were brought to London surrounded by soldiers. It would show a lack of confidence in his subjects,"

Hastings added, " and was an insult to all who had taken an oath of loyalty to the new King."

Elizabeth burst into tears and gave way. It was her first act as the Queen Mother and the consequences were tragic.

Attended only by a small body of personal servants, his uncle, the Queen's brother, Lord Rivers, and his half-brother, Lord Richard Grey, the boy set out from Ludlow. Eagerly the widowed Queen prepared to welcome her eldest son and her brother. She felt in this reunion would be consolation for her loss.

At midnight on May 3rd, as she lay sleeping in the Palace of Westminster, a servant came knocking at her bedroom door. A messenger, splashed with mud from a wild ride over many miles, demanded immediate audience. He was the bearer of ill news.

The Queen Mother sprang out of bed and huddled on a few clothes ; then the man was brought into her presence, and his news was tragic indeed. The Duke of Gloucester, who was believed to be on the Scottish border, had travelled with speed on hearing of his brother's death. He had taken the boy King into his own keeping and had made prisoners of Rivers, Grey and that Master Vaughan who had been the boy's devoted attendant all his life.

The news brought panic to the Queen Mother. That midnight messenger was followed by others, from Gloucester in which he declared the King was safe at the Bishop of Ely's palace, and the Bishop was loyal as Elizabeth knew. Yet that knowledge could not comfort her. Too late she realised the ghastly mistake she had made in allowing her son to travel without an escort. Now he was in the power of Gloucester as was her other son, Lord Richard Grey, and her brother. The shadow of death hung heavily over all who were dear to the distracted woman.

" In a moment of agony, however, she remembered that while she could keep her second son in safety, the life of the young King was secure." If

Gloucester murdered his captive, as quite possibly he might, the crown would pass to delicate little Richard of York who would stand between the would-be usurper and the throne.

Her thoughts turned to the Sanctuary where she had found shelter before, but for some reason, instead of seeking those gloomy walls she took refuge in the Abbot's palace, which was part of the Sanctuary or at least within its precincts. Much of the palace buildings remain, including the great hall in which Elizabeth received the Lord-Chancellor at break of day. In the night darkness she had crossed from her own palace to the Abbot's, her daughters by her side, the eldest, Princess Elizabeth, who was seventeen, comforting the others and carrying little Katherine, two years old, in her arms. There was another daughter, a baby, named Bridget, but she had been dedicated to the Church from her birth and was with the nuns at Dartford.

The Duke of York, eleven years old, had been suffering from some form of fever. They had brought him out of bed, wrapped in blankets, and the Queen herself carried him close to her aching heart, praying she might be able to save his young life for his brother's sake as well as for his own.

So they reached the Abbot's palace, and as the dawn broke the Lord-Chancellor, Archbishop Rotherham, arrived to assure the Queen Mother of his loyalty. She was in that great hall, about which he "found great rumble and heaviness" with the conveyance of her household belongings into the Sanctuary, and there is an ugly suggestion of looting in the words "No man was unoccupied, but some walked off with more than they were directed to other places." Evidently in addition to her sorrows the Queen Mother was the victim of dishonest servants.

As newly widowed, Court etiquette ordered Elizabeth should wear a closely fitting cap which would hide all her hair. In her sorrow such rules

were disregarded and we are told: "The Queen Mother sat alow on the rushes in dismay . . . her long fair hair, so renowned for its beauty, escaped from its confinement and streaming over her person swept on the ground."

Were ever a few words written that gave a more eloquent description of womanly beauty and womanly grief?

No doubt the visit of the Lord Chancellor comforted her for a time, but the comfort was short lived. . . . Her eldest son, Lord Dorset, came in terror to join her in her shelter, bringing news that her brother, Lord Rivers, with her other son, Lord Grey, had both been executed with the faithful Master Vaughan on some trumped-up charge. What this double bereavement was to the Queen Mother cannot be described, more closely she clung to her delicate little boy. Now Edward was a prisoner in his uncle's power, he seemed all that was left to her.

Another blow followed. Gloucester determined to get the Duke of York into his power and called a Council of the peers in the Star Chamber to decide his right to the boy. His argument was that "though there might be sanctuary in the precincts of the Abbey for men and women, children could commit no crime, therefore the privileges of sanctuary could not be extended to them."

The debate was stormy, many of the peers insisting on the Queen Mother's right to her child, but in the end the partisans of Gloucester won the day. . . . There was talk of sending an armed force to tear the boy from his mother, but the Archbishop, to his credit, begged he might reason with the Queen Mother, to tell her the decision of the Council and advise her to give up the boy as if of her own free will.

He was allowed to follow his kindly suggestion and entering the Abbot's palace was taken to the Jerusalem Chamber, that chamber in which

Henry IV had died. There the Queen Mother received him, her little son by her side.

"Quietly, kindly, the good man pleaded with her. 'The young King required the company of his brother, being melancholy without a play-fellow,'" he said.

The Queen Mother's reply was spirited and sensible, it shows how well she understood the danger of her boys.

"Can none be found to play with the King but only his brother who hath no wish to play because of sickness? As though Princes would not play without their peers, or children could not play without their kindred, with whom (for the most part) they agree worse than with strangers."

The Archbishop continued to argue and plead, till the other nobles who had accompanied him suggested threats, pointing out that force might be used if she remained obdurate. Poor woman, she realised she was beaten and nerved herself for the great sacrifice.

"My lord, and all my lords now present, I will not be so suspicious as to mistrust your truth," she said, then taking young Richard by the hand she led him a few steps forward. "I, here, deliver my son, and his brother's life with him, into your hands, and of you I shall require them before God and man."

That said she turned to the weeping child. "Farewell, mine own sweet son. God send you good keeping. Let me kiss you ere you go for God knows when we shall kiss again."

"Wherewith she kissed and blessed him and went away, leaving the poor innocent child weeping as fast as herself."

The Duke of Gloucester was the most bitter enemy of the Queen Mother, realising that if he murdered her children she would be a force to be reckoned with in her longing to avenge their lives. His first

attack on her was made in the Council held at the Tower where he showed his withered arm, declaring it had just become useless through her sorcery, an astonishing statement which no one dared to contradict excepting perhaps Lord Hastings, though everyone present knew the arm had been powerless from his birth. Hastings, bitterly regretting that advice he had given the Queen Mother, spoke of his loyalty to the boy King. They were almost the last words he ever said, for Richard had him hurried away and beheaded without even the pretence of a trial.

That charge of sorcery against the Queen Mother was persisted in, though no proof was brought forward. Still, the rumour served to alienate many who would have been her friends. The next step was an attempt to show that her marriages had been illegal, therefore her children had no right to the throne, and if that could have been proved no doubt the lives of the two little Princes would have been saved. But the marriage was legal beyond all doubt. Failing there, Richard went further, he blackened the name of his own mother, reminding his counsellors how his brother the late King had been called "The Son of an Archer," and drawing very unpleasant conclusions indeed. Strangely enough his mother, "proud Cis," does not seem to have protested against the scandal, but public opinion was revolted by the spectacle of a son traducing his mother, so the charge was dropped and the Queen Mother was the victim of another charge of sorcery. He proclaimed that the Crown must not go to the children of "the pretended marriage between King Edward and Elizabeth Grey, made by the sorcery of the said Elizabeth and her mother Jaquette, without proclamation by banns, the said King Edward being troth plight a long time before, to one Eleanor Butler, daughter to the old Earl of Shrewsbury."

To the Sanctuary where she remained in her suspense and sorrow, the last crushing blow fell on

the Queen Mother. She heard her two sons were dead in the Tower, though no one could say when or how they had died nor where they had been buried. Sir Thomas More has left a pitiful account of her anguish.

“ But when the news was first brought to the unfortunate mother, yet being in sanctuary, it struck to her heart like the sharp dart of death. She was suddenly so amazed that she swooned and fell to the ground, and lay there in great agony, yet like a dead corpse. And after she revived and came to her memory again, she wept and sobbed, and with pitiful screeches filled the whole mansion. Her breast she beat, her fair hair she tare [*sic*] and calling her sweet babes by name accounted herself mad when she had delivered her younger son out of sanctuary for his uncle to put him to death. After long imprecations she kneeled down, and cried to God to take vengeance. And when a few months afterwards Richard lost his only son for whose advancement he had steeped his soul in crime, Englishmen declared that the imprecations of the agonised mother had been heard.”

The death of Richard’s only child—a strange and tragic death of whose details we know nothing excepting that it came upon the little lad suddenly at Middleham Castle where his mother’s ghost is said to walk with her boy in her arms—was to bring another anxiety to the distracted Queen Mother.

Though the new King could not violate the Sanctuary by any act of violence, he could draw a cordon of soldiers round it and bring starvation to those who sheltered within the walls. . . . Absolute privation came to the Royal Family, and in the end the Queen Mother was obliged to yield herself a prisoner to the man she had such good cause to fear and hate. Her Royal rank was taken from her, she was given into the care of a Sir John Nesfield, who was allowed a certain sum for “ the finding, exhibition and attendance of Dame Elizabeth

Grey, late calling herself Queen of England." There was brutal insult in every line of the Act of Parliament which made Nesfield the allowance. All she had was taken away from her, she was not even allowed a servant excepting those in the pay of her gaoler.

Some obscure rooms, probably the attics of Westminster Palace, are believed to have been the scene of her imprisonment. Her eldest son, Dorset, had managed to escape to France and seems to have found means of writing to her from there, telling her how in Bretagne he had met Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, then in exile from England.

About Henry Tudor, Dorset wrote to his mother at length.

He was the grandson of Katherine of Valois, the son of one of the children she had borne to Owen Tudor, and through her he had the Royal blood of France in his veins. Also his mother had been Lady Margaret Beauford, descendant of John of Gaunt, thus he was in the direct line of the Plantagenets, the leader by right of birth of the Red Rose. Dorset—who if no soldier seems to have been a diplomat—pointed out that with Richard childless, the young Princess Elizabeth of York was heiress to the Crown in the line of the White Rose. The time for a reigning Queen in England was not ripe, but a marriage between Henry and Elizabeth would unite the houses of the rival Roses and consolidate the claims of both.

Then came a new blow for the Queen Mother. Richard's only son was dead, and his wife, Anne of Warwick, was marked for death. She was in the last stages of consumption, though if ever a woman could be said to be dying of a broken heart it was she. With that mysterious tragedy at Middleham which robbed her of her child, her last links with life were broken.

Rapidly she became worse when she was brought to Westminster Palace—there were ugly rumours

of poison being at work—and then Richard realised that his brother's eldest daughter was very fair. He, too, remembered she was the heiress to the throne and actually appealed to the Pope for permission to marry her when his wife should die.

The Princess, regarding him as the murderer of her brothers, was horrified at the suggestion. In that poor prison room she clung to the Queen Mother in bitter tears. The helplessness of them, two forlorn women as they were, was appalling.

The Queen Mother's health broke down utterly, and while she was believed to be at death's door, a new physician asked that he might attend her, a doctor-priest named Lewis. That she was very ill and that he was a skilled physician there is no doubt, but he happened to be also the doctor who had attended Henry of Richmond's mother and was her trusted confidant. While the Queen Mother was very ill he visited her daily, the Princess Elizabeth was watching by her bed, and through him the two women in their desperate unhappiness saw a means of escape from the tyrant they had such good cause to hate.

From the Queen Mother he took messages to his patroness, regarding Henry Tudor and Elizabeth, and thus the marriage which was to change the English dynasty was arranged.

Dorset worked energetically with Henry who was quite ready to fall in with his plans, and shortly after poor Queen Anne of Warwick died, and when the hateful marriage between Richard and his niece seemed certain to be celebrated, there came word that a force was marching upon London to proclaim Henry Tudor, King.

King Richard went out to meet him, and all know how he died on Bosworth field. At once the Queen Mother was released from her captivity and given the State apartments in the palace which had been her prison, and there the Princess waited with her

until the January when the marriage that set Henry securely on the throne took place.

Queen Elizabeth, besides being restored to her rank, received possession of some of her dower palaces again and a pension of a hundred and two pounds a year, not a great income for a Queen even in those days, but Henry was never generous whatever other good qualities he may have had. Best of all, from the point of view of the long-suffering Queen, the scandalous entries in the Parliamentary Rolls which had deprived her of all rights, were ordered by the Judges to be burnt unread "because from their falseness and shamelessness they were only deserving of utter oblivion."

To quote Strickland : " Although much has been said in history regarding Henry VII's persecution of his mother-in-law this, the only public act passed regarding her, is marked with dignity and respect. . . . It is possible Henry VII disliked the Queen Mother, and in this he was by no means singular, for there was never a woman who contrived to make more personal enemies, but that he deprived her of either property or dignity is not proved. She had had to mourn the deaths of three murdered sons, and had four daughters wholly dependent upon her, therefore it can scarcely be a matter of surprise that she seldom shared the gaieties of her daughter's court."

It is a more pleasant picture to think of her last years as peaceful, if not happy. In 1490 her annuity was increased to four hundred pounds and, because her health was failing she retired to the Abbey of Bermondsey, especially as it was the custom of Royal ladies to seek retirement in such religious houses, for the sake of the medical treatment and advice to be found there.

Six years after she had seen her daughter crowned Queen Consort of England, the Queen Mother was stricken by a fatal illness. She lingered for eighteen months, tenderly nursed by her daughters, and her

troubled life ended on Whit Sunday, 1492. Until the beginning of the last century the "noble panelled halls and State chambers of the abbey were standing in nearly the same state as when Elizabeth occupied them," though the abbey was destroyed at the Dissolution and a manor house built from its stones. Apparently the part which had held the State apartments was retained to form part of the new building.

They bore the dead Queen Mother to Windsor, where they laid her coffin on the top of her husband's, where he lies under a steel monument representing a pair of gates, the work of a Flemish craftsman, and on a flat stone at the foot are engraved the words :

King Edward and his Queen, Elizabeth Widville

[sic]

X

HENRIETTA MARIA OF
FRANCETHE QUEEN WITH THE WARM HEART AND THE
FOOLISH HEAD

CHARLES PRINCE OF WALES, the handsomest and most accomplished Prince in Europe, was expected to marry to order as was the custom of the times, and the bride selected was the Infant Marie, sister of King Philip IV of Spain. Had he been an ordinary English Prince he would have agreed as a matter of course, and waited at Dover or Southampton or whatever her port of disembarkation might be, to greet his bride-to-be and to marry her off-hand.

But Charles had in his veins the blood of his romantic ancestors, James IV and V of Scotland. Both those monarchs had sought their chosen brides in incognito, and, in the latter case, had refused the chosen lady and married another with whom he had fallen in love. History was to repeat itself when the young Prince decided to travel to Spain to see the lady he was expected to marry. His friend, the Duke of Buckingham, went with him, and during the journey they called themselves Tom Smith and John Brown. They disguised themselves with perukes and wore such dresses as might seem suitable to travellers of a fairly humble station, though not so humble they would not be able to get glimpses of the ladies of the Court.

The two young men had reached Paris when they saw a crowd gathered outside one of the Royal palaces of France—authorities differ as to the precise locality—and they asked what was afoot. The Duke of Montbazon, grandchamberlain to the French Queen, heard the question and checked his horse to answer it. Whether he had ever been in England and met the Prince there is not told, but it is insisted that he had no idea of the identity of "Tom Smith."

"You are strangers here," he said. "If I am not mistaken you are from England."

"You are right in that, sir," Buckingham answered. "We should be glad to know what gay doings are going on and if we might witness them."

"What you will see, if I let you in, is a ballet danced by the Queen of France and nineteen of the most lovely ladies of her Court," he said. "And as I am anxious to show courtesy to English strangers, I will give you two seats from which you may watch the gaiety."

The gates were opened to permit him to enter, and with him, humbly on foot, went Tom Smith and John Brown to see the sights. They were placed where they might see plainly though they would not be seen, and artist and musician as Charles was, he was stirred by the tripping music of viol and madrigal, to which the young Queen came tripping accompanied by her ladies. Amongst them was the Princess Henrietta Maria, the Queen's sister-in-law, and watching her with her light grace and winning smiles the Prince lost his heart, determining no Spanish princess should be wife to him. It is only fair to add that that is the version given by the poets and historians of the French Court, and in all probability it is true, for Charles' unswerving devotion to the Queen he won in the end is beyond question. The romance, however, if spoilt by the other side of the story, told by Spanish and English

historians, that an alliance with the Spanish Royal house was unpopular in England when the days of the Armada were comparatively yesterday, while the unhappy lot of Katherine of Aragon as the wife of Henry VIII was remembered in Spain. Still, the other picture is so much more pleasant that we will accept it. The Prince of Wales, standing humbly amongst the crowd that watched the masque, saw the young dancer by the Queen's side and lost his heart then and there.

Probably he contrived to see her again, still in his disguise, but as he had started to make the acquaintance of the Spanish Princess he could not linger in Paris. To Madrid he and his friend went, where Henrietta's sister was the newly married Queen, a most unhappy Queen hedged in with all the restrictions of the Spanish Court. The lives of all European royalties were narrow and bound by convention, but no other country approached Spain in the rigid rules which made the palaces so many prisons.

Apparently once in Madrid, and having seen the lady chosen him, Charles threw off his disguise. He was anxious to talk to Queen Elizabeth of Spain of her young sister in Paris and his efforts throw light on the conditions of the Spanish Court. Again and again he tried to speak in private with the Queen, but always was thwarted till one night she was in a box at the theatre and alone . . . or comparatively alone. Finding himself by her side for a few minutes he spoke in French, when in great agitation she told him she was forbidden to speak in her native language.

"I must not speak in French without permission, but I will endeavour to obtain it," she said. From whom she sought permission we do not know, presumably it was from her husband, but evidently it was given her, as Charles had no Spanish. She talked to him of her young sister, which was what he wanted her to do, and told him she hoped he would marry the girl, as she was sure he would make

her happy. Those words must have ended with a sigh. She looked into the handsome face of the romantic wooer, she thought of all she had heard of England, and remembered her own lot.

"Thank you a thousand times for those words, madam," the Prince said gallantly. "Now you have once had permission to speak to me in French, I hope I may be able to come to your box in the theatre another night for further conversation."

"No . . . no." Her whisper told of terror, with frightened eyes she looked round to see who was within earshot. "You must never speak to me again, for in this country it is the custom to poison gentlemen who may be suspected of gallantry towards the Queens of Spain."

He never saw her again. After that he was not allowed to approach her and when she attended the theatre she sat in a box shut in by lattice-work so that its inmates could not be seen. The precautions were absurd. Charles was no free lover and from that point of view never gave a second thought to the unhappy Queen.

Besides, he was quite determined to marry Henrietta Maria of France.

Religious differences beset the Royal love story. Henrietta Maria was a Roman Catholic, Pope Urban was her godfather, and quite sensibly he was opposed to the marriage. England was racked by that religious bigotry which remained her bane for nearly three hundred years, and the penal laws against the Catholic were brutal in their mercilessness. How, then, could a Catholic Princess hope for happiness in a country where those of her faith were hanged and burnt and imprisoned on the slightest pretence? Yet Charles was determined, and in the end the Pope gave way, on it being agreed the Princess should have absolute freedom to practice her faith and be provided "with chapels, oratories and chaplains." Further it was stipulated that the Royal children, should any be born, were to remain under their

mother's care until they were thirteen. Though nothing of the kind was stipulated, it was taken for granted they were to be brought up in the Catholic faith till they reached that age, and so, to all intents and purposes they were.

That is looking forward, however. . . . The marriage of the Princess took place at Notre Dame with the rites of the Church of Rome, the Duke de Chevreuse acting as proxy for the absent bridegroom. Charles I . . . he had ascended the throne during the time the marriage had been discussed . . . came to Dover to meet his bride, but her arrival was delayed by the dangerous illness of her mother, and the King retired to Canterbury as apparently there was some doubt as to the actual day when the new Queen might be expected. When she did reach Dover, he was not there to receive her, but a gentleman named Tyrwhitt, who possessed a horse of extraordinary speed, at once set out to tell him of her arrival, covering the distance between Dover and Canterbury in thirty-six minutes.

The King reached Dover Castle while the Queen was having breakfast and a pretty story is told of their meeting. Hearing that he had come "the young Queen hastened down a pair of stairs to meet him, then offered to kneel down and kiss his hand. But he wrapt her up in his arms with many kisses."

"Sire, I have come to your majesty's country to be at your command," was the set speech she had been taught to prepare, but the words were never said very clearly, for she burst into tears of emotion. The King "led her apart, he kissed off her tears, protesting he should continue to do so until she let off weeping. He soothed her with words of manly tenderness, telling her: 'That she had not fallen into the hands of enemies as she seemed to apprehend, but according to the wise disposal of God whose will it was that she should leave her kindred and cleave unto her husband.' Adding:

'He would no longer be a master himself, since he was a servant to her.'

The same evening the King and Queen travelled to Canterbury where they were married according to the rites of the Church of England in the great hall of St. Augustine's priory.

Because plague was raging in London Charles decided to take his bride to Westminster by water, and of that triumphal voyage, when London welcomed the King's bride, we have full accounts. Hitherto the Queen Mothers whose life stories have been given here, have been ladies who lived in what are known as the Dark Ages, when even the most advanced civilization was on a different plane from any we know in our own time. But in the seventeenth century life was almost as it is to-day, or if not that, certainly it was the life our fathers and grandfathers knew a few years ago. The amenities familiar to us had been introduced. Amongst these were the first newspapers, newsletters as they were called, and many remain to give us vivid pictures of all that happened. We hear, for instance, that the plague was raging so fiercely that summer that two thousand people died weekly and the city was so deserted the streets were green with grass that had sprung up between the stones. Yet bells rang till midnight on the day of the Queen's arrival and bonfires blazed on every height when night fell.

"Yesterday, betwixt Gravesend and London, our Queen had a beautiful and stately view of that part of our navy which is ready to sail," a newsletter reports. "Which gave her a volley of fifteen hundred shots. Fifty good ships discharged their ordnance as the gay flotilla passed up the river, and last of all, the Tower guns opened such a peal as I think the Queen never heard the like. The King and Queen were both in green dresses, their barge windows were open notwithstanding the vehemence of the shower, and all the people were shouting amain. The Queen put out her hand and waved it at them."

So, amid triumph and rejoicings, Queen Henrietta Maria came to her husband's kingdom.

Long after that happy wedding day, when dark clouds had gathered, King Charles said of his Queen: "Poor woman, the people hate her because she is my wife." It would have been nearer the truth had he said: "The people hate me because I am her husband."

If ever a wife ruined her husband, that wife was Henrietta Maria, yet she was devoted to him as he was devoted to her. From the time of their wedding to their last parting, they were in perfect accord in all that concerned their home life, and to him she remained the one perfect woman the world had ever held.

Henrietta Maria was a loyal wife, a tender mother. She never wavered in her affection towards her own people, and was steadfast to her friends, only unfortunately she did not choose those friends wisely. Many of those she trusted influenced her to do the wrong thing and betrayed her in the time of her greatest need. She was impulsive, never pausing to think before she spoke or acted, she was liable to give way to bursts of petulant anger, and though no one has any right to blame her for remaining true to the religion in which she had been educated, in the then state of popular opinion it was a mistake for her to flaunt her views as she did.

There lay her faults, there lay the chief reasons for the downfall of the King, but when we turn from the story of the political storms and strife to that of their private lives, we find pleasant reading.

Never have home ties been more close, never has there been a more perfect atmosphere of love than that which surrounded this unhappy King and Queen and their children.

The first of those children, a boy christened

Charles James, was born at Greenwich but died the same day. A year later comes Charles, Prince of Wales, a strong, athletic little lad, Spanish in colouring, plain in feature, with flashing dark eyes and gallant bearing. His brother James, born a year later, had far greater good looks but less charm. Comparatively fair, in later life he hid his brown hair under a black periuke with which his blue eyes contrasted. Rumour describes him as his mother's favourite child though that is unfair. Henrietta loved all her children too well to be accused of favouritism.

The next was Mary, Princess Royal . . . how familiar these names are to us . . . and then came Princess Elizabeth, born at St. James's Palace, January 28th, 1635. The room in which she first saw the light remains in the ancient palace unaltered. The early years of these children was lived in an atmosphere of peace, whatever storms might disturb the world around them. Dean Swift has left us a delightful little story of the Royal husband and wife, though by some twist of his distorted brain he describes it only to jeer at the King and say it shows his unfitness to govern. But the Dean had a scorn of happy love, whether in palace or cottage.

The King, "wishing of his tender love to surprise the Queen," had bought her a very beautiful diamond brooch. Coming up softly behind her chair, he bent over to fasten the brooch amongst the laces on her breast. Startled, because she had not known he was there, she moved quickly, and the pin of the brooch pierced her white skin, making an ugly scratch from which the blood flowed.

At sight of the blood : "The King turned pale, he looked alarmed and confounded as he never did in the face of his own dangers and misfortunes."

That such a story should be construed as a charge against him is one amongst the many instances in which perfectly harmless actions of the Royal couple were made to seem blameworthy.

A year after the birth of Princess Elizabeth another baby Princess was born and was christened Anne. The corridors of St. James's Palace . . . the gardens of Hampton Court . . . the ramparts of Windsor overlooking the silver river, . . . these were the play-grounds of the three happy little girls and their two brothers, though perhaps their favourite home was Oatlands, a palace at the mouth of the River Wey, nearly opposite Hampton Court. It belonged specially to the Queen, and often was referred to sneeringly as "the royal nursery," so fond were Henrietta and her husband of retiring there to be with their children.

Little Princess Anne was four years old when she was stricken by some illness, and the doctors told the watching Queen that her child was dying.

Agonised she bent over the little bed on which the baby soul was passing.

"Pray, my dear one, pray," she whispered.

The baby put her little hands together. "I'm afraid I can't remember my long prayer, but I'll say the little one if that will do," she lisped faintly.

"The long prayer" that had slipped from her clouded mind was the Lord's Prayer, but the "short one" came readily to her lips.

"Lighten mine eyes, O Lord, that I sleep not the sleep of death," she whispered. And never spoke again.

The times were full of trouble. From the shelter of their nurseries the Royal children grew familiar with the shouting of hostile crowds, . . . with the sound of breaking glass as sticks and stones were flung at windows . . . with stories of wrecked churches and of men and women killed or injured by rioting in the streets. The execution of Lord Stafford brought deeper shadow into the Royal homes. "The King suffered extreme sorrow for the loss of his friend, the Queen wept incessantly. They both anticipated truly that soon death would deprive one of life and the other of all happiness in

this world." Charles has been accused of betraying Stafford, but the sentence just quoted was written by a lady in close attendance on the Queen and in her full confidence.

To make matters worse, at this time of crisis the Queen Mother of France came to visit her daughter. Henrietta Maria was overjoyed at the reunion and there were happy scenes in the Royal nursery when the two Queens forgot their anxieties in their pride and love for the children. But outside the palace gates a tossing, unreasoning crowd howled against this meeting of mother and daughter. They saw political intrigue and religious persecution in every action, and were quite sure treason was being plotted when the two Queens were with the children. Rioting became so violent that the French Queen Mother decided she must return to France for her daughter's sake, directly the Royal wedding which loomed large in the minds of all at Court, had been celebrated. The ten-years-old Princess Royal was to be the bride.

King Charles had signed the marriage contract for his daughter, and her chosen husband was William, Prince of Orange, who was a year older than herself. As he was a Protestant, the marriage ought to have been popular, but because the Queen and her mother favoured it, the people at large decided some sinister motive was behind all.

On May 2nd a quiet ceremony took place in the private chapel in Whitehall Palace and early the following morning the Queen Mother of France began her journey home. The same day the mob broke into Westminster Abbey, defiling tombs, defacing beauty, stealing every treasure within reach, surely the most unreasonable action even an unreasoning mob ever undertook. They were supposed to be protesting against the presence of the Queen Mother, who was on her way out of the country, and the fact that both Queens were Roman Catholics, though how they thought they would

improve matters from their own point of view, by wrecking a Protestant abbey, is difficult to understand.

Matters grew so bad in London that the Queen took her two little daughters to Oatlands . . . the Princess Royal was to remain in England until arrangements could be made for her to join her boy husband. The King came to stay with them as often as possible, and earnestly Henrietta Maria longed to have all her children with her, but popular opinion was so inflamed it was not considered safe for the two boys to be in the same house. They were sent to Hampton Court which is only a stone's throw from Oatlands, though the river flows between.

Oatlands was a very old building in those days. Once a monastery, Henry VIII had taken possession of it, to use as a hunting lodge, and Queen Elizabeth had followed his example but had rebuilt and enlarged the house. Just where it stands, near the town of Weybridge, the River Wey divides into two mouths, and on the island, or rather the delta, thus formed, the monks of old had laid out their gardens and orchard, with lawns and parkland all enclosed by the silvery water of the rivers.

An old picture remains to show the house as it was when Henrietta Maria loved it . . . a very gracious and dignified mansion enclosing two square courtyards. After the death of Charles the mob wrecked and burned the lovely home for no other reason than that it was dear to the Queen. Later Charles II restored it for her use; since then it has been further rebuilt and modernised, and is now a deservedly well-known private hotel, but the old foundations remain with some few of the ancient rooms and places of interest are shown in the lovely gardens.

Amongst Queen Henrietta Maria's good points must be numbered a love of flowers and their culture. When she had first come to England she had been horrified to discover how far the country



HENRIETTA MARIA

From a portrait by Van Dyck, in Windsor Castle

was behind France in fruit and vegetable growing, and at her own expense sent an English gardener to France to study methods there and to bring back seeds and cuttings.

In Oatlands those seeds and cuttings grew to maturity.

At the time when Queen Henrietta Maria withdrew there with her two little daughters, she was waiting for the birth of her seventh child. Anxieties and dangers oppressed her on every side, yet her chief sorrow seems to have been that her sons were allowed to visit her so seldom. Occasionally they crossed the river to spend a little time with her, but harm was made of their most innocent actions. For instance, in Parliament a question was gravely asked demanding to know what business had taken the Prince of Wales to Oatlands on a certain date and if information was forthcoming as to the treason that might have been plotted then. The Queen was called upon to give an explanation, and did so. The Prince had rowed across the river to attend a party of children in celebration of his sister's birthday.

The trouble passed, there was never any suggestion that her explanation was not the literal truth, but the story serves to show another of the pin-pricks that made life so difficult for the harassed royalties.

The Queen's fourth son and fifth surviving child was named Henry and almost at once was created Duke of Gloucester, and as soon as she had recovered, the Queen decided to join her husband in London to share his dangers, while all the children were gathered in Hampton Court. In the Home Park at Hampton stands—or stood till within the last few years—a very ancient oak into whose great trunk iron staples had been driven. The legend goes that the Royal children had a look-out or playroom built on a platform high amid the boughs, and that these staples supported the ladder by which they climbed.

Money was scarce, large sums were needed to equip the troops the King must gather to defend his throne, and it was decided the Queen should go to Holland, ostensibly to take the Princess Royal to her husband, which really was one reason for the journey. The other, and more important one, was that she must sell her jewels to raise money for the King's need.

To little Princess Elizabeth the news of that journey came as a blow. Her sister, her constant companion, was being taken from her while her mother was bound for a distant and unknown land . . . Holland being rather more remote than than the South Pole would seem to us. The Queen kissed the daughter she was leaving with lingering tenderness, she begged the child to care for her baby brother, practically she left him in her care, and young Elizabeth promised faithfully she would do her little best.

So the Queen went away and again history gives a pathetic picture of family love. The King accompanied the Queen and the Princess Royal to Dover where he saw them on board the ship, which cast off and made its way out of the harbour, beating along the coast. "King Charles stood on the shore," writes Strickland, "watching the departing sails with tear-filled eyes. 'As the wind was favourable,' writes the Queen, 'my husband rode four leagues along the windings of the shore following the ship.' Malice may stain the name of the unfortunate Prince with venomous invective, yet to every heart capable of enshrining domestic affection, Charles I must be dear."

The Queen had to remain in Holland for a year before the sale of her jewels was carried through and she had the men, ships and munitions her husband needed. News from England was the worst possible, civil war had broken out and the

country was seething under the influences of the opposing factions.

Meanwhile she devoted herself to the education of her elder daughter, the boy Prince of Orange sharing the studies. His mother, a wise and kindly woman, was drawn to her young daughter-in-law and amid so much of tragedy this young Princess entered a new life surrounded by the understanding and affection which made her marriage happy in the years to come. She became the mother of that other William of Orange who married his cousin and is known to us as William III of England.

At last the time for the Queen's homeward voyage began at a time of sorrow for her since news had come of the death of the Queen Mother of France to whom she was so deeply attached. However, she had conducted the sale of her jewels and the purchase of munitions with prudence and judgment, borrowing two hundred and thirteen thousand guilders on her pendant pearls and forty thousand guilders for her six rubies. Altogether she raised a very large sum indeed and when she set out for England it was an English ship, the *Princess Royal*, accompanied by eleven transports, all deep laden with stores and munitions. Unfortunately the weather was against her. For three weeks those twelve ships wallowed in the wild North Sea, expecting every moment to be overwhelmed. Her ladies wept in terror of coming death, but the Queen never lost her gay spirits. Strickland's account of the voyage, founded on the Queen's own story as told in her letters, is too good not to be given here.

"The Queen, leaning against the rudder, persuaded her train to leave the discomforts of the cabin for a little fresh air. Indeed, the scene below, as described by the Queen in her letter to Madame de la Fayette, was anything but inviting.

"When the ship laboured and pitched, they were tied in small beds, enduring all the horrors of seasickness. At the time when the storm was at its

worst, all the Queen's attendants and even the officers and crew of the ship, crowded into her cabin and insisted on confessing their sins to the Capuchins of her suite, believing that death would ensue every moment. These poor priests were as ill as anyone, so were unable to be attentive, whereupon the penitents shouted their sins aloud in the hearing of everyone else. The Queen's gay spirits were not broken and she declared the absurdities she witnessed on that voyage made her laugh excessively, though like the others, she could not help expecting the ship would go to pieces every moment. When eating and drinking was going forward, the attempts to serve her in state and the odd disasters which occurred with her and her servitors tumbling over each other with screams and confusion, were so ridiculous that no alarm could control her mirth."

Certainly a sense of humour and splendid courage were amongst her other good gifts.

When two ships had been lost, the convoy was driven back to Holland, almost to the spot from which they had started, and after a rest of two or three days the hazardous passage was attempted again, this time with success, for in safety they reached the harbour of Burlington Quay . . . we call the town Bridlington in Yorkshire. In the harbour under the shelter of Flamborough Head, the ships began to unload, while the Queen, worn out by her adventures, found rooms in a house near the harbour, presumably an inn, and retired to rest. She needed it sorely.

At five o'clock in the wintry morning she was wakened by the sound of guns. Five vessels under Admiral Batten were bombarding her ships and raking the town with shot in the hope of killing her. One shot struck the house in which she had found shelter . . . the wall of her bedroom was shattered . . . her servants hurried her from the tottering place as another ball struck the roof and came crashing to the ground floor. She wrote to the King

the next day, telling him of her safety and describing her peril.

“ Before I was out of bed the balls whistled so loud about me that my company pressed me to go out of that house. The cannon having totally beaten down the neighbours’ houses, two balls fell from top to bottom of the house where I was. So clothed as well as in the haste I could be, we went a little distance out of the town and got into the shelter of a ditch, whither, before I could get there, the cannon balls fell so thick about me, that a servant was killed within seventy paces of me. One dangerous ball grazed the edge of the ditch and covered me with mud and stones. The firing lasted till the ebbing of the tide.”

She did not tell him of one part of the adventure which shows her in a generous light. Accompanying her from Holland, probably having gone there with her a year before, was “ a very old and ugly little dog ” named Mitte who loved its mistress and was loved by her. It had been sleeping in her bedroom when the bombardment began and was forgotten in the hurry of huddling on clothes and escaping from the shattered house. Henrietta had only just reached the street when she remembered.

“ Mitte ? ” she cried. “ Where is Mitte ? ”

Her servants looked at her in surprise, not to say anger. How could she, a Queen whose life was in danger, pause to remember an old and ugly little dog.

She read their thoughts, she knew that none of them would risk death in the doomed house for such a cause, so alone she ran back to the bedroom she had just left, found poor, frightened Mitte and escaped with him in her arms, just in time. As she reached the street again another of the cannon balls fell through the roof and made the place a heap of ruin.

Through the bitter darkness of that February morning, Henrietta crouched half-clothed amid the

mud and water of that frozen ditch with Mitte. When the tide ebbed, the attacking ships had to withdraw, there was safety on land at last; but the Queen who had cheered and encouraged others all through the night, was so drenched and chilled, her limbs were numbed and she was unable to walk. They carried her to Boynton Hall—that is standing yet—and there she was massaged, as we should say, and placed in warm blankets and given hot food and drink. But the mischief had been done. She who had been a light and airy dancer, who had won the King's heart as she had tripped gaily in the masque, soon was to become a cripple as the result of that night's exposure. Her dancing days were ended indeed.

However, at first she was able to get about still, and on the morning after a day and night of rest and care, she went back to Burlington to see the damage that had been done and to hear from the captains of her different ships what stores had been saved. As she moved towards the quay she met a procession coming from the town hall, in its midst a gentleman under guard, his hands manacled. At once she asked what was happening and was told the prisoner had been captain of one of the bombarding ships who had been rash enough to come ashore. At once he had been seized and a military tribunal of loyal gentlemen had sentenced him to immediate execution for the attempt on her life.

"But I have forgiven all that," she said. "And as I am not hurt he shall not be put to death on my account."

The man was set free and there in Burlington High Street, he knelt in his gratitude before the Queen, vowing to be a loyal man to her and the King so long as he lived. He kept his word.

The Queen's letter, describing her peril, did not reach the King for some days, and she was still at Boynton Hall, being nursed after the hardship and exposure, when his reply was brought to her,

another human document, evidently written in haste.

I never knew till now, dear heart, the good of ignorance, for I did not know the danger thou were't in until I had the assurance of thy happy escape. I shall not be out of apprehension until I have the happiness of thy company again, for, indeed, I think it not the least of my misfortunes that thou, for my sake, must run so much hazard. It is impossible to repay by anything I can do, much less by words. But mine heart being full of affection for thee, admiration for thee, and a passion of gratitude to thee, I could not but write something, leaving the rest to be read by thee out of thine own noble heart.

The King and Queen were reunited after the battle of Edgehill and entered Oxford together, where they kept court for a while, believing the war was ending. She was racked by anxiety for her children while her own health was causing the King deep concern. That night of terror in the ditch had its aftermath in a very severe form of rheumatism which left her crippled, and in an effort to get relief from her torturing pain she decided to go to Bath to obtain a cure from its waters.

Apparently she did not know, or had forgotten, that only a little while before a great battle, the Battle of Bath, had been fought between Roundheads and Cavaliers on the hills overlooking the city . . . they call the place The Battlefields still. From that battle fugitives had rushed screaming through the narrow streets of the city in the hollow, to die there fighting or begging uselessly for mercy as the case might be. For days the bodies of the slain had lain unburied in the gutters, up on the hill dead men lay breeding pestilence in heaps, their bones are turned up by spade and plough to this day. The wind blew towards the city which became a fever den and realising the madness of attempting to remain, the

suffering and crippled Queen allowed herself to be taken to Exeter to await the birth of her eighth and last child.

Reports of her illness were taken regularly to the King who was leading his army in the field again. He insisted on being kept informed of every change in her condition and, when the news was very bad he wrote a brief letter in his own hand to Sir Thomas Mayerne, a physician in whom both he and the Queen had great faith.

Mayerne, for love of me go to my wife.

C. R.

The heart-broken cry of a distracted man, of an adoring husband can be read in the line. Always he spoke of Henrietta Maria as "my wife," making the words sound as a term of endearment. And that he called her "wife," instead of "Queen," was one of the "crimes" laid to his charge.

Sir Thomas Mayerne obeyed the summons at infinite danger to himself, arriving in Exeter in time to be with the Queen when her little daughter was born. Already hostile forces were approaching the city, the sound of guns, the shouts of men who were drunk with excitement and blood lust were in the air.

"The Queen shall die—we'll kill her as Jezebel of old was killed," they yelled in wild chorus, and planned how she should die.

Her baby was less than a fortnight old and she was very ill, so racked by rheumatism every movement was torment, yet she had to go. With bitter tears she kissed the baby many times and laid it in the arms of the Countess of Morton, one of her few loyal friends.

"Care for my little child," she begged with streaming eyes. "Care for her as your own till you can give her to me again."

And with the little bundle of humanity in her

tender arms, the Countess gave the promise she was to keep with romantic devotion.

That farewell over, the Queen hobbled from the city on foot, attended only by one gentleman and one woman servant. To their horror they saw the spears and pennons of the Roundhead army advancing towards them. Escape in that direction was cut off and flight was impossible considering the Queen's condition. In a field beside the road was a little hut, though it hardly deserved even that poor name, being rather a heap of brushwood which had been hollowed out. Creeping into the opening they filled it again with dried fern and gorse so that a miserable shelter was provided in which they could not even stand upright nor lie at ease. There, in the cold and darkness, without food or drink, they remained two whole days and a night. The enemy soldiers had camped in the field, and, crouching in her poor shelter, racked with pain, faint from hunger, the Queen had to hear their coarse jokes when her name was mentioned, and their cruel boasts. A price was on her life, they told each other. They would kill her, take her head to London and claim their reward.

At last the dreadful hours ended. The soldiers moved on to take possession of the city, and, more dead than alive, the Queen and her friends crept from their hiding-place. Somehow they reached the coast, she was carried on to a waiting vessel and was taken to France where a warm welcome awaited her from her sister-in-law, Anne of Austria.

The King had made superhuman efforts to save her, but only reached the city after her flight. A battle was fought under the walls, the forces of the Parliament were driven back, and Charles hastened to the room where the Countess of Morton waited with his little child.

According to her own account, when he entered and she saw his ravaged face, the Countess was too overcome for speech. All she could do was to lay

the baby in his arms and turn away, not trusting herself to witness his emotion. Presently he called his chaplain and ordered the baby should be christened at once, being given the names of Henrietta Anne. Hurriedly the ceremony was performed. When it was over the King took the child and pressed his lips to the little face on which the baptismal water was shining.

In silence he gave the child back to Lady Morton and went away.

Two years slipped by, the Queen, still a cripple, remained in France where, to her joy, she was joined by the Prince of Wales and Duke of York. News from England remained full of terror and disquiet; then she heard the King had been taken prisoner and sent to Hampton Court, where the Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Gloucester remained. The time of reunion with their father was very sweet to those two forlorn children who had had to bear many hardships since they had been in the hands of his enemies. While he was at the Court, Cromwell and his wife came to visit him, and traditionally Mrs. Cromwell, a motherly soul, exerted herself to obtain something of comfort and consideration for the children, proof that they had had very little of either hitherto.

From Hampton Court, Charles escaped by a secret passage to the river, but was recaptured and taken to Carisbrook, from whence after suffering and cruelties, he was brought to London to stand his trial in Westminster Hall—a brass plate let into the floor shows where he sat to hear the sentence of death.

They took him away to St. James's Palace, giving him only a few hours in which to make his last preparations.

Those preparations were very simple, he had nothing of value to leave, poor man. First he asked

that he might be allowed to see the Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Gloucester, but in case his request should not be granted he begged one of the loyal servants to give his Bible to the Princess. There were three dogs of whom he thought in his last hours, and he begged the servant to try to take them to the Queen.

"They have been faithful to me—they have loved me," he said. "That will commend them to her care."

It is difficult to believe a movement was on foot to prevent him seeing his children. On one hand an effort was being made to proclaim the little Duke of Gloucester King, disinheriting his two elder brothers under the pretext that they had been under their mother's influence, while as the Queen had not seen him since he was eighteen months old it was impossible for her to "have contaminated his mind." Another section, led by Hugh Peters, who it is charitable to suppose was a madman, strove to prevent the last meeting merely as a way of showing their power.

"Let him die without his last wish being granted," Peters said in effect. "As for the children, they may die too. Or if they do not die they shall live in hardship and poverty."

More merciful councils prevailed, and early on the morning of her thirteenth birthday, the Princess, who was at Sion House, was told that she and her little brother must prepare for the journey to London. They were to see their father for the last time.

She bore the blow bravely. We are told she was calm and composed until the long, cold drive was over, but as she entered St. James's Palace she burst into tears, and, seeing her weep, the little boy wept also as he clung to her hand. He was just eight years old.

One of the most pathetic documents ever written is that account of the last interview, set down by the

Princess as a labour of love, that we, of the after generations, might know her dearly loved father's wishes in that dreadful hour. Written in schoolgirl hand on yellowing paper, the pitiful document runs :

What the King said to me on the 29th of January (sic, the 28th is meant), 1648, the last time I had the happiness of seeing him alive.

He told me he was glad I was come, for though he had not time to say much, yet somewhat he wished to say to me that he could not say to any other. And he feared "The Cruelty" was too great to permit of his writing.

"But, sweetheart," he said, "Thou wilt not forget what I have to tell thee."

Shedding abundance of tears I told him I would write all down he said to me. He wished me, he said, not to grieve for him, for it was a glorious death he should die, it being for the Laws and religion of the land. He told me what books I should read. He said he had forgiven his enemies and had prayed God to forgive them also. And he commanded me and the rest of my brothers and sisters to forgive them also. Above all he desired me to tell my mother that his thoughts had never strayed from her and that his love for her would be the same to the last. Withal he commanded me (and my little brother) to love my mother and to be obedient to her in all things. He desired me not to grieve for him, for he would die a martyr, and he doubted not God would restore the throne to his son, my brother, and that then we should all be happier together than we could possibly have been if he had lived. Then taking my brother, Gloucester, on his knee, he said :

"Sweetheart, now they will cut off thy father's head." Upon which the child looked very steadily upon him. "Heed, my child, what I am saying. They will cut off my head and perhaps make thee King. But mark what I say. Thou must not be King so long as thy brothers, Charles and James, are alive. Therefore I charge thee do not be made King."

At which my brother, sighing deeply, said : " I will be cut to pieces first." And these words, coming from so young a child rejoiced my father exceedingly. And his Majesty spoke to him of the welfare of his soul, and to keep his religion, commanding him to God Who would provide for him. All of which the young child earnestly promised."

Strickland must finish the story from the account left by Bishop Juxon who was in attendance on the King until the last.

" The King fervently kissed and blessed his children and signed to Bishop Juxon to take them away. They sobbed aloud. The King leaned against the window, trying to repress his tears, till they went to the door. Then he hastily came from the window, snatched them to his breast, and kissed and blessed them once more. Then tearing himself from their caresses, he fell on his knees, and, strove by prayer to calm the agony of that last parting."

With the dawn of the next day Bishop Juxon read the twenty-seventh chapter of St. Matthew. " When morning was come all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. . . ."

" My lord, did you choose that chapter as being applicable to my situation ? " asked the King.

" I beg your Majesty to observe it is the Gospel for to-day as the Calendar indicates," returned the Bishop. He adds that the King seemed deeply affected and increased the fervour of his prayers. So they came to the walk across St. James's Park in the snow-storm, to Whitehall Palace, where presently the King stepped through an upper window on to a balcony and . . . died with calm dignity.

Whitehall Palace has been swept away, excepting the fragment now a museum, once the banqueting hall, and no trace remains of that window with the tragic balcony. Yet the exact spot over which it projected is marked for those who care to follow the

clue. The statue of the King was so placed that a line drawn from his pointing baton, leads to the spot where he died. Recently there has been some talk of moving the statue to another site in consequence of traffic regulations, but we will hope nothing of the kind will be done. Let it remain for all time to show where the axe fell.

Soon afterwards Charles II left France to make his romantic bid for the Kingdom, meeting disaster at Worcester and escaping under almost exactly similar circumstances to those in which his great nephew, Bonnie Prince Charlie, got away from his enemies a hundred years later. The adventures of the one lay in the green West Country, those of the other amongst the bleak majesty of the Western Isles, but history repeats itself very strangely, even to the extent of the Princes both wearing women's clothes, and passing as the waiting-maids of the brave and loyal ladies who risked so much to save them.

Charles returned in safety to his mother in France, but his attempt to gain the throne had a terrible effect on the fate of the other children. It is difficult to understand the mentality that could make a girl of thirteen and a boy of eight responsible for their brother's rashness, but they were taken to far more rigorous imprisonment in Carisbrook while the existence of three-year-old Princess Henrietta was remembered tardily and there was talk of punishing her also.

Rumours of that fantastic cruelty reached the Countess of Morton, in whose care the baby had remained, and the Countess determined to lose no time in restoring her to her mother in France. A sufficiently difficult and dangerous task since any false step would have certainly meant the "arrest" of the small Princess.

Strickland tells us that "Lady Morton was tall and well formed, with the noble air and graceful carriage of a Villiers beauty," . . . she was a Villiers by birth. Her appearance being so striking, the need of a

disguise became of double importance, also the disguise must be very complete indeed. Rising to the occasion, she dressed herself in rags, stained her fair skin a dark brown, and "made up a roll of linen" which she wore between her shoulders to give herself the appearance of being humped-backed. Then she stained the little Princess dark brown also, and dressed her as a ragged boy. With the child toddling by her side, carrying a little bundle of poor clothes, the Countess set out to walk from London to Dover, having neither food nor lodging except such as she could beg by the way, getting a lift now and again in cart or waggon. Very thoroughly she proved her courage and truth.

The alarm went out. Soldiers were scouring the roads for a lovely countess and a child princess, but no one heeded the humped-backed beggar woman and the little boy she called Pierre. The journey was one of untold hardship and strain and peril, but the worst of the latter came from the Princess.

That small person, too young to understand her danger, insisted on protesting against all she had to endure. She was tired of walking—her little feet were blistered by the rough shoes—she wanted the comforts of her nursery, and above all, whenever they rested in any kindly shelter or were given food, she would insist on explaining to farmer's wife or gipsy wanderer, that she was not a little boy, but a little girl, and that they must not call her Pierre, she was a Princess.

Fortunately she was backward with talking so nothing she said was very clear, while the similarity of sound between Pierre and Princess as lisped by the baby lips, helped matters, as did the wildness of her claim. Everyone knew that gipsies were supposed to steal children, though why they should do so except for ransom, has never been explained, but that such a poor woman should steal a princess was fantastic; no one understood what the child was trying to say and so no real harm was done. But

the Countess must have gone through some very bad times, and when they were alone no doubt her small charge had many a slap to make her stay her tongue. Emphatically it was a case in which a little girl should be seen and not heard.

After many days of weary travel Dover was reached and "the poor hump-back," begged a passage to France on a small coasting vessel. She could pay nothing, she said ; she could only beg the skipper to take her out of charity. Fortunately he was a kindly soul, and let her find such shelter as she could for herself and the child on deck amongst the piled-up cargo. So the crossing was made, and when they landed on French soil the transformation was made. The humped-back disappeared, the bundle of poor clothes was opened to show money was hidden amongst the rags, and the skipper was well rewarded. In comparative comfort the fugitives travelled to Paris where the baby Princess was given into the arms of the heart-broken Queen Mother.

Père Cyprian, an eye-witness of that reunion, has left us a description of the scene :

Oh, the joy of the meeting between mother and child. Oh, the consolation to the heart of the mother that her little one who was lost was found again. How many times we saw the Queen clasp her, kiss her and kiss her over again. The Queen called the Princess the Child of Benediction.

Not for many years were mother and child separated again, and the Queen Mother found consolation in the little one's love, while traditionally Henrietta was the most beautiful of all the Royal children.

The Princess Elizabeth and the little Duke of Gloucester were not so fortunate. For them there was no escape from the bigots. They were sent to Carisbrook, a place of unhappy associations for the Princess, since there her father had been made to



Photo

ST. JAMES'S PALACE TO-DAY

Central Press

Scene of the last meeting of Charles I and his children.

suffer deeply. Also it was quite as unfitted for her residence as a coal-cellar would be for ours. A grim stone pile, it had been built in feudal ages, but in the seventeenth century such castles were either in ruin or had been made into military fortresses. Rich people lived in mansions, the time for feudal pomp had gone. Thus these children, accustomed to the gracious dignity and comforts of Oatlands or Hampton Court, of St. James's Palace or Sion House, found themselves carried through wild forest lands and across the stretch of sea to a grim and frowning fortress, and within those stone walls, in cold and narrow chambers with their lancet windows, with stone corridors without where armed men tramped on guard, the girl Princess and her small brother were held prisoners.

She devoted herself to him. She tried anew to impress upon him all their dying father had wished him to be, she taught him to love the mother and sister and brothers he hardly remembered, and talked of the baby sister neither of them had seen. It was her work and her solace, poor child, to teach the little boy lessons of sweet home life and a lofty devotion to duty.

In the late August of 1650 she fell ill with a fever that was brought on by hardship and cold and nerve strain. No one recognised the gravity of her condition, or perhaps no one cared. On the night of September 7th they locked her in her prison-room as usual and when they went to her the next morning they found her lying in the attitude of peaceful sleep, her cheek on the open pages of the Bible which had been her father's last gift. She was in her fifteenth year.

When Queen Victoria built Osborne House to be one of her favourite homes, she remembered the tragic fate of the Princess and asked where she was buried. No one could tell her. The child had been laid somewhere in the churchyard of Newport parish church, close to the castle, but the grave had been

unmarked and not even tradition remained to tell where it had been. In the church the Queen raised a monument to her memory, one that in white marble shows the girl sleeping her last sleep. Few visitors to the Island do not visit the church to appreciate the pathos of the monument, though often they do not know its story. Post cards of it abound all through the island and command a ready sale.

The execution of Charles may have been a political necessity, as to that others must judge, but no excuse can be found for the callous indifference which left that girl Princess to die alone in her prison. Her fate shocked even many of those who professed themselves the enemies of the children. Hugh Peters exulted, but others realised they had gone too far, and by tacit agreement the little Duke of Gloucester was sent overseas to join his mother.

5

While England was under the Commonwealth the Queen Mother lived in France with her three sons and her young daughter. Through all her great sorrows she had one very true friend who stood by her very splendidly in the days of her fall. This was Lord Jermyn who had been her Treasurer and the Keeper of her Privy Purse when she had been at the height of her power and, according to unkind tongues, had feathered his own nest out of her fortune. Probably that is not true. Henrietta Maria was lavish in her generosity, she helped everyone who came to her in trouble, and this accounted for most of the large sums she spent. Also it is possible that Jermyn, seeing danger ahead, took upon himself to set aside money for her use when she should need it.

Whatever the truth he followed her to France and told her that all his fortune—he was a very rich man—was at her disposal. In one account it is

said she and her children owed everything to him, their food, their clothes, their servants; but, in contradiction, there is no doubt Anne of Austria settled a very handsome income on her fugitive sister-in-law. What happened was that as long as King Charles was alive, the Queen denied herself even necessaries that she might send him practically all the money she received from the Queen of France. For him she borrowed and mortgaged, and it was here Jermyn came in after the King's tragedy, straightening out tangled affairs, paying debts and generally showing himself well worthy of the trust King Charles had reposed in him.

When the news of the death of Charles reached France it was Jermyn who tried to prepare her by telling a garbled story that the King had been condemned to die, certainly, but had managed to escape. He hoped by that means to soften the blow, but at last the truth could be kept back no longer and that loyal friend had to tell her of the full tragedy. This is the account of the scene given by Père Cyprian who was present :

"The Queen complained of the tardiness of her messenger whom she had sent to gain tidings. He ought to have returned before this, she said.

"Then Lord Jermyn spoke : 'The gentleman you dispatched on this errand is known to have been so faithful and so prompt in executing all your majesty's commands, that, if he had aught but very disastrous tidings he would have been in your presence 'ere this.'

"'Whatever those tidings may be,' said the Queen, 'I see you know them full well.'

"'I do indeed know somewhat,' Lord Jermyn replied.

"The Queen, dreadfully alarmed, entreated him to speak less darkly, and after many ambiguous words he at length explained the horrid truth to her. She stood motionless as a statue, without words and without tears—to all our exhortations our Queen

was deaf and insensible. At last, awed by her appalling grief, we ceased talking and stood around her in silence, some sighing, some weeping. So we continued till nightfall when the Duchess of Vendôme, whom our Queen tenderly loved, came to her. Weeping she took the hand of the Royal widow and at last succeeded in waking her from her stupor of grief."

Madame de Motteville, another of the Queen Mother's friends, gives another picture of Henrietta in her deep sorrow.

"Often did Queen Henrietta say to me that she was astonished how she survived the loss of Charles. 'I have lost a crown,' she would say. 'But that I have long ceased to regret. It is for my husband I grieve. Good, wise, just, virtuous as he was, most worthy of my love.'

She resolved to live for the sake of her children, and on the advice of Anne of Austria went to some baths which relieved her rheumatism considerably. She was never active again, but was not actually crippled, and some chest weakness, also the result of that night in the Bridlington ditch most likely, made her more or less an invalid.

The account of the death of Princess Elizabeth was the next blow; but heavy though that was, it was softened somewhat when little Henry of Gloucester was allowed to join her.

In the years which followed, Henrietta devoted herself to her children; but, unfortunately for them in a worldly sense, she determined all should be brought up in the Catholic Church. For this she has been vilified by almost all historians, but surely her attitude could be understood. Her husband had been executed by Protestants, by Protestants she had been driven into exile with her children, when she had claimed the jointure which was hers by rights as the Queen Mother she had been insulted and robbed. In a Catholic country with the influences of her childhood strong about her, what more

natural than that she should come to view religious differences with jaundiced eyes and in her way become as great a bigot as Hugh Peters himself.

Her efforts brought a rift between her and her eldest son. Whatever may have been the faith of Charles II later in life, in his young manhood he was an ardent Protestant, and when he went from Paris to the Court of his brother-in-law, the Prince of Orange, he made his mother promise she would not try to influence young Henry of Gloucester to change his faith. The Queen Mother promised, but did not keep her word; no doubt to her the breach of faith seemed justifiable. The boy, then in his early teens, refused to be convinced, on which she lost her temper very badly and told him she would never see him again. Bitterly hurt, he returned to the rooms set apart for him to find that they had been dismantled of all comforts and that the servants had orders not to serve him with food. Even his horses were turned out of the stables and poor Gloucester would have fared very hardly if some of the impoverished cavaliers had not sold their few remaining treasures to support him. Religious intolerance swept over her and surely she hardly knew what she did, though just as surely she was convinced it was all for the good of her children's souls.

Lord Hyde, himself a staunch Protestant, helped her sons in their rebellion against her wishes. The Duke of York, her favourite son, took the part of his younger brother, with the result there was an estrangement between him and the Queen Mother—the whole story of these years of exile is one of family bickerings and differences, though the brothers were particularly united. Nothing served to part them.

Looking back at Henrietta Maria, we see her as a headstrong, but charming girl who committed many follies but few sins—as a devoted wife, who made terrible mistakes though they were those of the head,

never of the heart—now as the widowed Queen Mother she was doubly headstrong, doubly unwise. That she wished her children to embrace the faith so dear to her is understandable, but the way in which she went to work to bring that about simply alienated them. During the last years of her exile her sons had gone their own way and she was left with Princess Henrietta as her sole companion.

Joy came in the news of the Restoration. Charles was King of England, but again sorrow followed on the heels of gladness. The young Duke of Gloucester who had accompanied his brother to England and shared his triumph, sickened of smallpox and died in London, "by the great negligence of his doctors," as Pepys tells us. Another blow was the marriage of the Duke of York to the daughter of Edward Hyde, which meant—so the Queen Mother believed—his stronger adherence to the Protestant cause. At this latter news Henrietta was so disturbed that she hurried to England for the express purpose of trying to get the marriage annulled.

The return to London was a great ordeal. Some sort of welcome was given her by the people; but it was a half-hearted affair, and in any case the sight of the rooms at Whitehall which she had occupied with her husband and of the window through which he had gone to his death were agonising. Nothing altered her anger against the young Duchess of York. A man came forward with a story that was foully slanderous, yet the Queen Mother was ready to believe it—there is no suggestion against her bona fides in this—and through it the Duke and Duchess were parted, though the girl herself, when gravely ill, swore to her innocence and may be believed.

The Princess of Orange had come to England and agreed with her mother so far as Anne Hyde was concerned, but the Princess was seized by the dreadful disease that had carried off her brother, young Gloucester, and died at Somerset House on Christmas Day, 1660. Almost with her last breath she said

that the eyes of the dying could see that which is hidden from others, and in her last hours she felt convinced of the innocence of her brother's wife.

The reconciliation of the Duke and Duchess of York followed, but Henrietta Maria never forgave either in her heart, though outwardly she pretended to accept the Duchess as her daughter. She went back to France to be present at the marriage of her youngest child, Henrietta, with the Duke of Orleans, then returned to England, where she made her home chiefly, either at Somerset House or in the Queen's House at Greenwich. She was the last Royal lady to live in the building that is now a museum.

Mention must be made of the story given full credence by many authorities that before this time she had married her faithful Jermyn, now made Lord St. Albans in recognition of his loyal services. There is no shred of evidence to support the story, and the fact that to her dying day the Queen Mother wore the most pronounced mourning for the King surely disproves it altogether.

She was again in France, to be near her beloved daughter, but a complication of diseases caused her much suffering and sleepless nights. The doctors ordered a narcotic, and probably she took an overdose on the night of August 30th, 1669, for in the morning they found her in her bed as if asleep, but she was quite dead.

Her dearly loved daughter, whose marriage had been most unhappy, died six months later—from poison it was said, with every probability of truth—and shortly afterwards the Duke married again, choosing Elizabeth of Bavaria, said to be the greatest scoundrel of the age. It is to her vitriolic pen we owe the story of the Queen Mother having married Jermyn, "who used to treat her very badly and never say a kind word to the Queen." Fortunately, as has been said, there is no reliable evidence

of such a story. The Queen Mother's life was filled with sorrow, but the tragedy of an unhappy marriage was not amongst them, nor, if she had married him, have we any reason to think Jermyn would have treated her badly.



Photo

W. E. D. Downey

QUEEN ALEXANDRA

At the opening of King Edward's First Parliament.

ALEXANDRA OF DENMARK THE QUEEN WHO WAS LOVELY AND BELOVED

DURING the last three-quarters of a century our outlook has changed perhaps more greatly in connection with death and mourning than with anything else, with the result it is difficult for us to visualise the depth of gloom and depression which gripped Britain in the winter of 1861-62, when Albert the Prince Consort was newly dead. It could not be described as a wave of national grief, for the dead Prince had never found his way to the Nation's heart. He had lived in Britain, he had striven for her, had worked for her good, but to all intents and purposes he had been a stranger within her gates. He had won the respect that must be given to a man of high principles and blameless life—those who knew him best admired him for the patient dignity with which he faced many difficult situations—but apart from his family circle he was not loved.

Now he had died after a brief illness. His widow, prostrate with sorrow, was going into retirement, and the young Prince of Wales, little more than twenty years of age, found himself thrust into a new and difficult position, for which, be it written with all due respect, his particularly narrow and stilted upbringing had done nothing to fit him.

Already rumours as to his marriage had been afloat for some time. Queen Victoria and her

Consort were feudal in many of their views and while the Prince had been a small boy his parents had discussed whom he was to marry. Three ladies, all German Princesses, were selected, and no doubt the Royal couple felt they were giving their son a great deal of liberty in allowing him so much choice. He had been about sixteen when he was sent on a Continental tour with his tutors, ostensibly to increase his knowledge of languages, but he knew perfectly well the real object of his travels was to have the three ladies presented to him that he might decide. It need hardly be added that Queen Victoria strongly believed in early marriages.

Unfortunately for the Royal plans, those travels took him to Berlin, the home of his elder sister who had been married a year or so before to Prince Frederick William of Prussia, and had become the mother of the Prince we know as that fallen monarch, the ex-Kaiser. The marriage of the Prussian Prince and the English Princess was most unhappy, and the result of that visit was to fill the Prince of Wales with an intense dislike of everything German which never seems to have lessened.

Not one of the three suggested ladies appealed to him in the least, and in a very uncertain state of mind, he accepted the offer of an Italian Prince for a few days' sport at his shooting-box. While there the conversation turned on the newly discovered wonders of photography. "Had the Prince ever seen a portrait taken by a camera?" he was asked. Apparently he had not. Someone produced some specimens of the "new art," and amongst them was a portrait of sixteen-year-old Alexandra of Denmark. Whether the production of that portrait was as accidental as it seemed, or whether some Court intrigue was behind the action, does not matter. He saw the portrait and was attracted to its original far, far more than to any of the other ladies.

He began to think back. Hazily he remembered a children's party at Buckingham Palace six or

seven years before, and a golden-haired little girl who had been brought there because she was visiting the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and was a particular friend of their young daughter. The story goes that on his way back to England he insisted on staying a few days at Copenhagen under an assumed name, and managed to see the Danish Princesses, though he could not make himself known under the circumstances. And directly he returned home he went to Cambridge Cottage at Kew, which was the home of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, and there had a very long talk to their only daughter, Princess Mary Adelaide of Cambridge, of whom, quite rightly, he had the highest possible opinion.

"The straightest, truest, kindest young lady that ever walked," was what a poor woman once said of that Princess, and never was praise better deserved. Princess Mary Adelaide was a bright and jolly soul, but she had shrewd common sense and a wide sympathy that won her friends in every walk of life. Another description of her was that she made everyone feel better for having spoken to her, and this Princess, so sensible and kind, so sympathetic and understanding, was the chosen friend of Princess Alexandra. They had been friends from babyhood.

From the Princess, the young Prince of Wales heard a great deal of life at the Danish Court, and as the result of what he had been told, he made up his mind definitely.

His parents were deeply concerned. There was no valid objection to the Princess, but that a future King of England should choose his wife irrespective of political considerations seemed almost improper to their eyes. In the end, they gave way. He was "allowed" to go to Bavaria where the Danish royalties were on holiday, and when the young Prince and Princess met we may take it they came to a very good understanding though there was no formal engagement. That was the position of affairs when his father, the Prince Consort, died.

Queen Victoria, deep in her mourning, consented to allow Princess Alexandra to visit her at Osborne and Windsor. Little is known of that visit which had to be strictly private. Everyone was clothed in the deepest black, no sound of gaiety was allowed to penetrate the shadowed rooms, and apart from the Danish Princess the only guests were the Grand Duke and Duchess of Hesse, Queen Victoria's second daughter and her husband. The Duke was a dour, silent, depressing person, described as looking like an undertaker out on business, and his wife, a very sweet and gentle girl, took life with painful seriousness. She could hardly do anything else by his side. No wonder that when Alexandra met her friend Princess Mary Adelaide, "she was too over-joyed to speak." That cheerful, wholesome, sustaining personality was in so great a contrast to the sighing shadows which stalked the hushed rooms.

The formal betrothal followed, the wedding-day was fixed and all arrangements made for the Princess to come to England for the ceremony—as her husband-to-be was heir to the throne it was a matter of etiquette the marriage should take place here.

At eight o'clock in the morning on March 7th, 1863, the Royal yacht, *Victoria and Albert*, passed the Nore with an escort of warships, our first iron-clad amongst them, and watchers saw on the deck a girlish figure wearing a dress of mauve Irish poplin, over it a flowing cloak of purple velvet edged with fur, on her head a poke bonnet that seemed made entirely of white rose buds. It is not the dress a modern princess would choose to wear on a sea voyage, but it was considered eminently suitable and most becoming.

At Gravesend the yacht anchored and a boat put off carrying the Prince of Wales. The crowd watched the lovers meet. It was expected he would bow low and perhaps kiss her hand, but instead he just drew her to him and kissed her on the lips—a human touch that won the goodwill of the people there and

then and made the Nation take them both to its heart.

On March 10th the wedding took place, at St. George's, Windsor, Queen Victoria sitting apart in a hidden alcove from whence she could see without being seen. Even on such a day as this, more than a year after her husband's death, she could not lay aside her crape for even a few hours.

For nearly forty years after that wedding-day, the Prince and Princess of Wales were the uncrowned King and Queen of England, bearing most of the Crown's burdens, yet without possessing any real power.

Had Queen Victoria abdicated at the beginning of her widowhood, as rumour said she intended to do, it may have been her young son would have found the responsibility too heavy, yet, as matters were, the position was made more difficult for him.

The Prince was given no authority. He was expected to attend public functions with his lovely wife, to identify himself with the Government and become familiar with the social and political movements of the time, besides keeping on excellent terms with other countries, yet he had to refer to his mother on all important questions, and probably not the least difficult problem he had to face was that of pleasing Her Majesty. She became increasingly difficult as time went on. For years London did not see her. Buckingham Palace, left to the servants, had all its blinds drawn excepting for the occasional afternoons on which the Princess of Wales held "drawing-rooms" as deputy for the Queen.

Edward the Peacemaker the Prince was called in the days of his mature manhood, but the title was deserved from the first of those years when he, with his girl wife, faced that difficult situation. Mistakes

were made of course, but they were few and far between. The wonder is they were so rare since not one couple in a hundred thousand, thrust into the limelight, burdened with terrific responsibility, would have come through the ordeal so triumphantly.

In the heart of Norfolk the Prince of Wales had bought the Sandringham estate which he and his Princess made their real home. Here their children grew up amid an atmosphere of love and freedom very different from that which had obtained in the Victorian palaces. A lady who lived on the estate wrote a little-known description of life there in which she gives some charming pen pictures. Here is one of them.

"The grand event of the week during the Sandringham season was to see the Princess and her children at church. I do not think I am quite sane on the subject, therefore am hardly competent to write about it. It never occurs to me she is a woman at all, but some exquisite little being wafted straight from fairyland to say and do the kindest, prettiest things all the days of her life.

"To see her for once only under that painted window with the glory reflected on her, would be a joy for ever, and I had the privilege Sunday after Sunday, for months together. And there was Prince Eddie, grave and quiet, looking as if the responsibilities of eldership had already begun to weigh on him, and Prince George, ready for any fun and mischief as soon as the service was over, and up to a few little tricks even before. . . . Then those three dear little Princesses, like everyone else's little girls, only so much more simple, all crowding round their mother as if there was no one like her in the world. . . ."

An enthusiastically drawn picture, yet one from life and so to be remembered. The Prince Eddie mentioned was the eldest son of the Prince and Princess who died in 1892. Prince George lived to be our late King, the most dearly loved monarch

who ever ruled our land, and the "three dear little Princesses" were the late Duchess of Fife, the late Princess Victoria whose death cast so deep a gloom over Royal circles last year, and the present Queen of Norway.

On January 22nd, 1901, Queen Victoria died at Osborne and the Crown passed to her son. At once the new King and Queen determined to sweep away the gloom of the Victorian Court and to inaugurate a new era of brightness, knowing a wave of trade prosperity would follow the innovations. The conventional year of mourning had to be passed quietly, but the February of 1902 saw the first State opening of Parliament for many years. Very rarely the old Queen had attended such a function, a queer little figure in rather rusty black which contrasted with her diamonds. But King Edward decided his first Parliament should open with fitting splendour. It was typical of his attitude towards his Queen that he ordered a chair of State should be made for her, exactly the same as his own, and the two be placed side by side. Hitherto the Queen's Consort had had to be contented with much plainer chairs, set in the background, while in Queen Victoria's days the Prince Consort was never given a chair at all, but had to stand at the side of his wife's. Now the Consort's chair is placed beside the King's as King Edward ordered, to do honour to his Queen.

In the following June the Coronation was to take place, but literally on the eve of the ceremony the King was stricken by sudden illness and the day that should have been filled with rejoicing was passed in solemnity, the shadow of death darkening over the land. Almost by a miracle he recovered, the belated ceremony took place in the August.

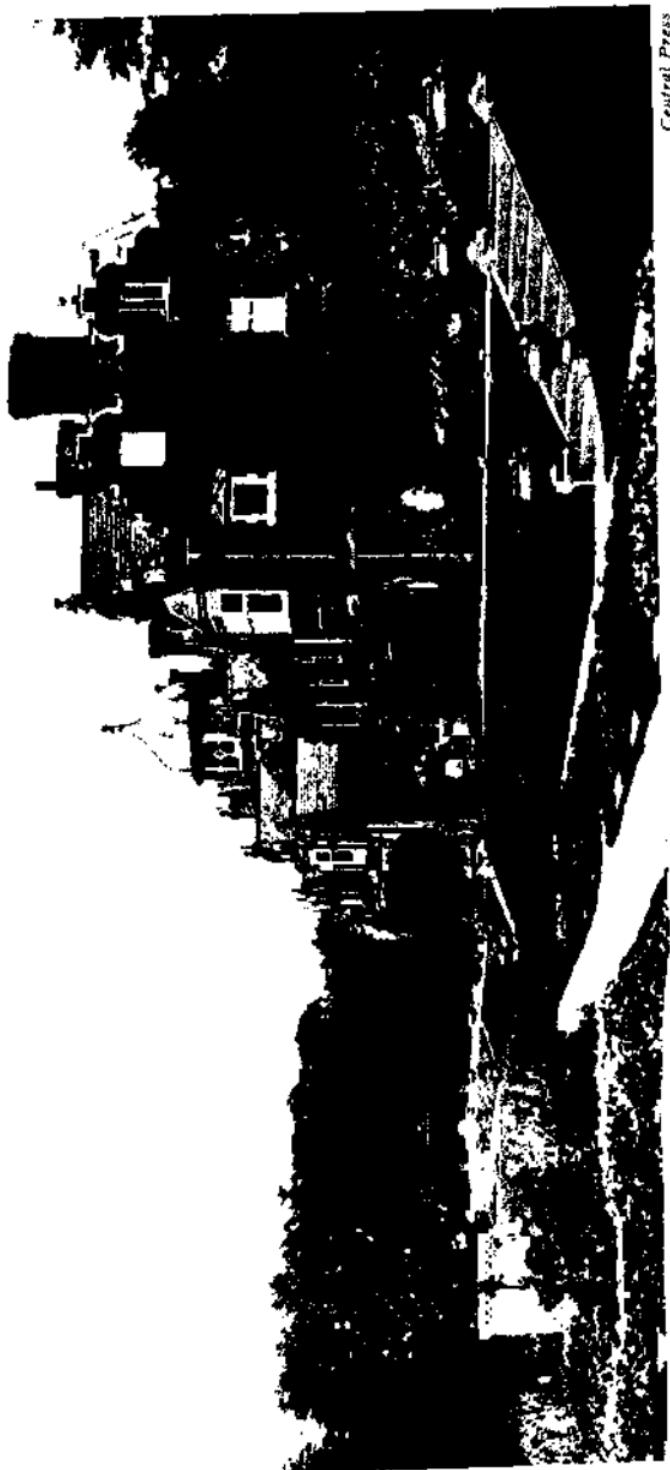
For nine years in all, that brilliant reign lasted, then, on May 5th, 1910, King Edward died in the

presence of his devoted wife who had not left his bedside throughout his illness. The Crown passed to his surviving son, George, and according to precedence, Alexandra, the lovely and beloved, would have been known as the Queen Dowager. But, rightly or wrongly, the word "dowager" has become associated with old age, and age could never touch the Queen's gracious beauty. Thus by a happy thought King George bestowed upon her the title of "Queen Mother," and, strictly speaking, she is the only one of the widowed Queens who has a right to be so called.

For the fifteen years of her widowhood she remained what she had been from the moment she came to England as a young bride, a lovely woman who was worshipped by the nation for her sweetness and charm. Her influence over her children, not alone in those years, but in the many which had gone before, is too recent to be more than lightly touched upon without impertinence. But looking backward, realising the enlightenment, the humanity of our present King and of his father, we see traces of wise and wide upbringing. For the sons and daughters of the "Prince and Princess of Wales" there were no narrow restrictions, no hedging in with Court etiquette, no rule by which a royalty must not choose bride or bridegroom. Their education was far fuller in every sense of the word than that of a generation before, while over all and through all shone a good home influence—the influence of mother love.

After the War, which was a great strain on the Queen Mother, she lived chiefly at Sandringham, and in connection with her withdrawal from London a story, suppressed during her life, but which found its way into the Press after her death, may be repeated.

Royalties suffer from heavy taxation no less than their subjects, and the after-war taxes and super-taxes made so great an inroad into the Queen Mother's fortune, it was calculated her income was reduced



Photo

SANDRINGHAM HOUSE

The dearly loved home of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, of King George V and Queen Mary.

Central Press

by half. The position was put before her. Bluntly she was told expenses would have to be curtailed. In what direction should that be done? There were her charities, for instance . . . ?

Very definitely she told her advisers she would have no change made there. Her donations to public funds were large, but far greater was the amount she disbursed in personal charity. All that must be given as usual, she said, but since economy was essential she would practically close Marlborough House, her London home, and reduce her personal expenditure in every possible way.

Thus, in its eventide, that once brilliant life glided pleasantly, peacefully to its close. She laid aside the burden of Royal state to live as a lady bountiful amongst the people who loved her. In Sandringham a thousand stories are told of her gracious charm and kindly heart, and of these none is sweeter than one which belongs to the last summer of her life. When driving through the lanes if she saw children playing by the wayside, she would stop the carriage, and getting out, gather the little ones round her, leading them to open their hearts to her, to tell her of their joys and sorrows.

No wonder when she died, on November 20th, 1925, the Nation mourned the Queen Mother as a familiar and dearly loved friend who had been taken away.

XII

MARY OF TECK

OUR QUEEN

JUNE 12th, 1866, saw a pretty wedding in what was then the little village of Kew. That bright and charming Princess Mary Adelaide of Cambridge, the girlhood's friend of Alexandra of Denmark, was marrying the Duke of Teck, and because neither bride nor bridegroom was well off, and the bride was too sensible to wish for empty display, she walked through the village to the little church, that poor folk who had known her all her life, might come very near and rejoice with her in her happiness upon her wedding day.

Queen Victoria bestowed a suite of apartments in Kensington Palace upon the young couple, and there their only daughter and eldest child was born. They had three sons later. Victoria Mary the little Princess was christened, but in her family circle the name was shortened to May and as May of Teck she became known to the British people as she grew from childhood to womanhood amongst us.

Close to the throne as she was, her mother was Queen Victoria's cousin, she took part in certain great functions as a matter of course, but more often she was heard of in connection with the family gatherings at Sandringham which was almost a second home to her, or in some work connected with charity or the education or training of those in need of help. Princess Mary Adelaide, Duchess of Teck, was a notable organiser and an indefatigable worker.



W. & D. Downey

KING GEORGE V AND QUEEN MARY
(When Duke and Duchess of York)

With their first child, Prince Edward of York, now King Edward VIII.

She never tired in her efforts for the good causes which asked her help and were close to her heart, and in all Princess May was her right hand.

Thus trained by a wise and loving mother to work for others, to take an active interest in domestic affairs and yet to have wide interests embracing many social subjects, no young Princess was ever brought up in a manner better befitting a high estate. It was with no formal rejoicing, but with heart-felt gladness, that the Nation heard of her engagement to the Duke of York, who had been Prince George of Wales. What gave her a special hold on all hearts was that she was so thoroughly English—English by birth . . . English by upbringing . . . English in sympathies and outlook, the first Queen Consort of whom that could be said.

Of that ideally happy marriage little need be said here. For more than forty years that Royal husband and wife were practically never apart. She shared his world-wide travels, and when he ascended the throne, she was more than his Consort, she was his wife and helpmeet in the truest sense of the words.

The Nation rejoiced in the perfect home life of the First Gentleman and Lady of the Land. When anxiety and sorrow pressed upon cottage and palace alike in the dark days of the War, drawing all classes together in mutual grief, the King and Queen set an example to all. Peace was proclaimed and after that came the very human interest of the Royal weddings and the dawn of new happiness for the King and Queen.

Afar, yet very near in heart, the people shared that last sad vigil when the great King passed, and now in all loyalty to the Queen, in all admiration to the Mother, we unite to pray she may live for many years to see the Empire flourish under the son she loves.

God save the Queen.

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